The Werewolf Next Door

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The Werewolf Next Door

by slashyrogue

Summary

Sequel to: A Good Neighbor

When Adam Raki moves to Baltimore after his father's he's trying to get a hold on his magic, and be closer to where his mother was born. His magic has always been hard to control, and he's hoping to calm it down. He doesn't expect to meet anyone, as his works from home and rarely leaves, but when his magic directs him toward a small bar he comes face to face with a werewolf who intrigues him.

But his magic is unstable, and the things he feels around Nigel are like nothing he's ever felt before.

Is it worth what may happen in the end?

Nigel is not the mating type and never expects to be. Which is why when the blue eyed witch who comes to his bar bewitches him so completely he vows to stay away from him. Too bad he's living right across the hall, and Nigel's wolf is howling beneath his skin to get closer.

Will he be able to resist?

Chapter 1

“I should never have bought a two bedroom,” Adam said, putting away his clothes as he spoke to Harlan on speakerphone, “It’s too big and I don’t like it.”

“Why? You’re grown now, Adam. It’s perfectly understandable for you to…”

He frowned as he closed the dresser drawer. “I only came here because that’s where she was from,” he sighed, “I…I miss…I…”

Adam clenched his fists at his sides as Harlan sighed.

“Son, if you didn’t want to go you could’ve stayed here. The other apartment was paid off, and you liked your job. Yeah?”

He stared at the open box of clothes. “I didn’t like my job,” he mumbled, his anger getting worse, “I only worked there because my Father knew someone, and…it was quiet. He…he wanted…”

“Adam, calm down.”

Adam turned around fast, and saw Harlan’s face on the phone. “DON’T TELL ME TO CALM DOWN!” he yelled, and the video started to turn to static as the phone rose in the air, “I’M NOT A CHILD!”

“ADAM STOP IT RIGHT NOW!”

He angrily pushed with all his strength, and the phone went flying across the room hitting the wall. It shattered, and Adam stared at the remains in tears.

Not another one.

Adam wiped his eyes, and went to find the box labeled ‘phones.’

There were two more left, he’d already broken three, and it wouldn’t be hard to put his sim inside. He only had to apologize to Harlan later, that was all.

He grabbed the box, took out the phone, and began to dismantle the whole thing.

His father had gotten him these last two, kept for sentimental reasons, but it had been a year. If he didn’t use them he’d run the risk of not being able to at all when they went out of commission. Adam set the open phone down and stared down at the remains.

It was hard to concentrate on what he wanted, not just for this really, but he stared at the sim card long enough that it started to float.

Adam smiled as it came to him with ease.

He really was getting better at being a witch.

Adam began to put the phone back together with his hands after, focused completely on getting the whole thing together, and when he closed the back he was happy to see it light up with ease. He immediately called Harlan.

“Adam….”

“I apologize for yelling,” he said, frowning, “I know you probably don’t want to see me in a video call, so I just wanted to say sorry.”

Harlan sighed. “Son, of course I want to see you.”

Adam frowned. “You don’t have to.”

“Son, I’ve known you since you were barely out of diapers. I know you, alright? I know…I know how hard it’s been to deal with your…gifts.”

He lifted the phone up to turn on the video, and Harlan’s face came into view.

“My father didn’t let me deal with them,” he said, “Not after…what happened to my mother.”

“I know, and…I kept telling him when everyone announced themselves that it was time. He was just scared of losing you, Adam, that was all.”

Adam frowned. “My mother was careless,” he said, “She should’ve known better.”

“Adam, that’s not true.”

“She…”

“She died to save you, Son. That man was gonna hurt you, and she would’ve done anything to keep you safe. You know that.”

Adam looked at his hands. “People didn’t like things they didn’t understand back then.”

“They still don’t,” Harlan said, “But…if you think you can find others like you? Then I want that for you.”

He looked up. “I want that too.”

Harlan smiled. “Keep me updated, Son. Alright?”

“Yes, Harlan. I will.”

“Have a good day, Adam.”

“Thank you, Harlan.”

“Bye, Son.”

“Goodbye.”

Adam grabbed his new phone from the dresser, and put it into his pocket as he went to take more clothes out of the box. He had a shirt in hand just as he heard yelling.

It was just after dark, and he’d been at this all day, but he’d been assured the neighbors were rarely home at night. Adam walked across the apartment and went to the door to peer outside. There were two men laughing as they stood in the doorway across the hall, and when one turned Adam noticed he had fangs.

This really was a monster neighborhood.

The realtor had assured him it was safe, but made sure he knew it wasn’t entirely human. There were humans, but not many, and they were mostly there because they were interested in mating.

Adam didn't know a lot about mating, but it seemed very permanent and complicated.

He had trouble with romantic relationships already to throw in mating rituals and bonds.

No, that wasn't for him.

Not at all.

The man who'd been yelling pulled the other man into a kiss, and though his back was turned Adam wondered what he looked like. The vampire hissed as they parted, and the man turned around teasingly twirling in a circle.

Adam blinked when he saw the man's face.

He was handsome, extremely, and one look at him made Adam want to see more.

Was he Adam's neighbor, or was it the vampire?

The vampire ran at the man, grabbing his shirt, and pulled him into the apartment shutting the door. Adam stared at the closed door for far too long, and his hands felt warm. He stared down at them, confused.

He'd had issues in the past with touching strangers, reactions that often were more psychic than physical.

This felt different.

Adam took some deep breaths and tried to put the man out of his mind for the rest of the evening. He had to unpack, and his new job started tomorrow. It was an at home job,

computer help over the phone, and he was thankful he didn't have to see anyone.

Not with his powers the way they had been lately.

He got a lot of unpacking done until dinner, and made macaroni while watching an online video narrated by a faceless witch whose username was TowerofBabel. Tower of Babel had been the only online tutorials he'd found for witches, though there were never very many nice comments on his videos but Adam's, and it was because of him Adam decided to move closer to where his 'magic' was born.

That was how Tower of Babel had put it.

'Go where your magic was born.'

Adam wasn't sure anymore it was the best decision.

The rest of the night went well after the video, and Adam went to bed that night without any noises bothering him outside. Though he did have the strangest dream.

He was laying in bed, and there was a very large wolf beside him. The wolf's warmth made him lean back, and he could feel its breath on his neck.

"Thank you," Dream Adam whispered, "For saving my life."

The wolf didn't talk, but it pressed its nose to the back of his neck.

Adam woke to the smell of smoke, and shot up in bed only to see the phone box sitting on his dresser was on fire. He put it out fast, the smoke billowing in the room, and he stared at his hands.

How had that happened?

He frowned and got out of bed, confused as he threw away the box's remains.

Adam struggled to fall asleep again, and nearly missed his alarm running to his station to start his new job. He was rattled all day, barely doing anything right, and was in tears by lunch.

What was wrong with him? He ate as he watched another video, doing his relaxation exercises with Tower of Babel, and he was determined to answer his next call correctly.

"Hello? Is this Tech Support?"

"Yes sir, this is Tech Support. My name is Adam and I'm here to help."

The voice on the other end scoffed. "Yeah, right. None of you fucks have been able to help me for weeks. I have a Tech5000 and it's barely able to ring up one thing."

Adam typed in Tech5000.

It was a cash register.

He'd never worked with cash registers.

He frowned. "Sir, this is a computer tech support line."

"It has a fucking computer in it! Your stupid sticker was on the bottom!"

Adam frowned. “What…what is the problem, Sir?”

“It doesn’t fucking work.”

“I know that, Sir, but…”

“Nevermind, I’m done with this garbage.”

The line went dead, and Adam stared at the clock. He had only thirty more minutes left in his day, and he hadn’t really helped anyone.

This move really had been a terrible idea.

He blinked back tears, hoping no one called, and read the Tech5000 manual while he waited. The machine wasn’t new, at least five years old, and when he typed in ‘Tech5000 problems’ he found tons of people online having similar issues.

No one seemed to know what the problem was.

The manual was no help, but he didn’t mind the reading while he waited.

The minute his alarm went off he was happy his first day was over and clocked out.

Adam stretched, ready to go have dinner, and went to heat up some macaroni when something made him pause.

Was he going to spend his first night here all alone?

His schedule was dinner next, but maybe there was a restaurant he could go to?

Adam frowned, not sure if this was a good idea, but remembered what Tower of Babel had said today.

‘Let your magic speak to you.’

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. His hands weren’t warm, not yet, but he felt like this was the right choice. Adam pulled out his phone, and typed in restaurants near you before grabbing his coat.

The minute he was outside he felt a chill, but went to his car determined to see this through.

His magic would take him where he needed to be, he was sure.

He just had to let it speak to him.

Adam drove without a destination, anxiety getting worse the longer it took, and kept his eyes on the clock above his radio. He had only ninety minutes for dinner, and it had already been forty five.

He drove, tears in his eyes, and felt nothing.

Maybe this wasn’t where he was supposed to be at all.

Adam took a deep breath and pulled into a parking lot to calm down.

He could turn around and go home to eat. He’d cut into reading time, and make the rest of his night worse for it, but at least he wouldn’t go hungry. Adam sighed, ready to turn around,

when he looked up.

There was a lit moon on the window that made him feel oddly warm.

Adam turned off his car and got out, locking behind him as he walked toward the door.

The bar inside wasn't large, or small, but it felt like he was supposed to be here. Adam sat down at an empty booth and stared at the other patrons.

He saw some people with fangs, and others even had eyes that lit up when they spoke to one another.

This was a supernatural bar.

Adam felt his stomach growl, and looked around for someone who might come wait on him. No one seemed to be out at the bar at all, much to his upset, and Adam was about to leave when suddenly someone was sitting across from him.

The man smiled.

"You're finally home."

He frowned.

"Do I know you?"

The man took Adam's hands in his, and the instant connection made tears fill his eyes. He could almost feel the power in this man's hands.

“You’re…like me, and…we have the same name.”

The other Adam smiled. “I’m glad it will be you,” he said, patting Adam’s hand, “He’s been alone a long time.”

Adam frowned. “What?”

“I’ll come find you soon,” he said, sliding out of the booth, “But not tonight. I’ve got a,” he glared behind Adam, “Problem to take care of again.”

Adam turned to see a vampire biting another woman’s neck.

“I don’t understand.”

Other Adam touched his hand again. “It’s ok,” he whispered, “Just breathe.”

Adam felt oddly calm as the other witch left, and he didn’t follow. Things were strange, yes, but still he wasn’t upset. He was here for a reason, but maybe not that one. He looked at the bar, and still saw no one.

His stomach growled, and he kept searching the room but saw no reason to stay.

Why was he here?

He was about to leave when a loud curse made him look up again as a man came out of nowhere slamming a bowl on the bar.

“Come pick up your stupid macaroni!”

Adam blinked, and looked around. He waited for someone to come up but instead stood to go to the bar himself. “Excuse me, sir?”

The man, whose nametag read Nigel, suddenly looked up and froze.

“Sir?”

Nigel’s eyes flashed yellow and Adam felt warm all over.

Oh. He was a werewolf.

Was he the reason?

“Can I have the macaroni and cheese?” he asked, his voice shaking.

Nigel pushed the bowl toward him, and Adam took it with both hands. “Did you make it?”

He nodded, looking completely lost, and Adam took a bite.

“It’s not very good,” he said, “But I’m very hungry, thank you.”

Nigel said absolutely nothing as Adam sat down, and he kept looking over at him. His hands felt warm the longer he stared, and Adam wondered if maybe Nigel was the wolf from his dream.

He hoped he was.

A sudden growl made him frown as Nigel ran off toward the back again, and he ate every last bite of his food. It tasted better as he finished, and he wanted more immediately.

Could he ask?

Adam pulled out his phone and looked at the time.

He had to leave.

The bowl was hot under his hands when he brought it to the counter, and put a five dollar bill underneath. He didn't say anything, desperate to keep his schedule, and forced himself to leave for his car.

He'd found what he was looking for.

Now he just had to figure out why his magic had led him here.

Was it for the other witch named Adam?

Or was it Nigel?

He didn't know.

But he was definitely going to find out.

Chapter 2

Nigel didn't fuck with witches.

It didn't matter who they were, or how harmless they seemed, if a witch came in his orbit he steered clear. He served them at his place, naturally, but if any sniffed around lookin' to hop on his cock he ignored them.

But this new one was something else.

He'd been frozen at the sight of those beautiful blue eyes, barely able to form a coherent sentence, and the minute he'd forced himself to run off he was half shifted ready to howl. Nigel dug his claws into the wooden floor, growling, and waited for the scent to go before he stood again.

The empty bowl was waiting when he returned, and thoughts swirled in his head as he held it in his hands. He had no idea how he'd even made the food for the blue eyed witch, no idea at all.

He didn't have any macaroni, and obviously no fucking cheese.

The bar's menu was strictly finger foods, fried frozen shit he got at the warehouse club. He didn't actually 'cook' anything, unless you counted throwing it in the microwave 'cooking.'

But somehow he'd made this.

Nigel didn't touch the bowl for the rest of the night, keeping it close by, and avoided eye contact with the fanger witch who seemed oddly smug. Everyone cleared out by two, though Nigel kept looking for the witch he never returned.

Part of him hoped he never did, even while his wolf howled wanting to find his scent again.

Though his wolf was known to be an idiot.

Nigel took the bowl carefully to the back, and stared at the remains inside. The fork hung there, like a lifeline, and he couldn't help but pick it up. He took one tentative lick, and the taste of the blue eyed witch's tongue touched his.

And he licked the whole fucking bowl clean.

He was like an animal, nose pressed into the small bowl as he sniffed, and when he was finished the cold cheese stuck to his nose.

"What the fuck?"

Nigel threw the bowl down in the sink, and drowned it in soapy water.

He wiped the cheese from his nose, shaking, and washed the dishes with care.

Fuck if he'd go near the witch again.

Nigel went home that night with the witch's scent in his nose, and walked up to his place still on edge. He just got up the stairs when he caught it.

The scent.

His wolf clawed at his insides, and he growled trying to force himself not to follow but he couldn't resist. The scent led just across the way, at number 66A, and he pressed his nose to the wood.

The witch was his neighbor.

Fuck.

Nigel was shaking as he pressed his face against the wood, resisting the urge to shift, and half hoped the witch would open the door.

This was bad.

Really fucking bad.

He pulled away, shaking with need, and ran to his own door to get inside. The keys fell from his hands twice but he managed, tearing off his clothes as he kicked the door closed. His shift was painful, unwanted, but he let it come.

His wolf wanted out.

So he let it out.

He didn't remember anything else until morning, waking up in a ball on the ground by the door. There were claw marks so big he was sure he'd have to pay for a new door, and he groaned as he stood.

What was he gonna do?

Moving away seemed the only option, though there were few neighborhoods that welcomed wolves. Humans were all about the fangers, desperate to get sucked and fucked, but werewolves were something else.

Nigel leaned against the door, and was about to turn when he heard a noise in the hallway. He peered out the peephole, and saw the witch exit his place. Nigel bit back a whimper as he watched him, claws already digging into the wood again, and to his surprise the witch looked directly at his door.

Like he knew he was there.

He froze.

How would he know he was here?

The witch turned away, flicking his hand in a circle, and went for the elevator instead of the stairs. Nigel stared after him, biting his lip, and the minute he was out of sight he slid to the floor.

“Fuck me,” he sighed, “Fuck, fuck, *fuck* .”

He looked around for his phone and found it half broken in a pile of his torn clothes.

“Call Darko.”

The phone rang several times before Darko picked up.

“If you’re not dying, I don’t know why the fuck…”

“I’ve got a problem.”

Darko paused. “Who’d you kill?”

Nigel sighed. “No one, fuck, it’s…there’s a witch.”

“Another one?” Darko laughed, “Brother, you really….you know what fucking happened last time you got near one of them. You had to leave the country, and barely survived. You… you’re supposed to be dead, Nigel, and doing this…”

“It’s…bad,” he growled, “I…I don’t even…he’s either so fucking powerful that I can’t stop this time or there’s…something else.”

“What the fuck does that mean? Something else?”

“You know what they say,” he said, “About true…”

“There’s no such thing as true mates,” Darko mumbled, “Not for dogs like us.”

“I’m not a dog.”

“You’re not mate material either, and if you’re even thinking otherwise…I’m not gonna help you again.”

Nigel closed his eyes. “He…he’s…”

“It don’t matter who this witch is, Nigel. You fucking stay away.”

“He lives across the fucking hall, Darko, what am I supposed to do?”

“Move away, and fast.”

Nigel opened his eyes to look at the torn up door. “I’m not sure I can.”

“Then kill him,” Darko said, “Either kill him or move away. You can’t do this again, Nigel. Not again.”

He growled. “I’m NOT gonna kill him! He’s…he’s…”

Darko sighed. “Why did you even call me if you’re not gonna listen?”

“I don’t know,” he said, “I thought…maybe you’d know what to do.”

“I told you what to do, but you’re not gonna do it so why bother? Just…don’t get locked up. You know what they do to dogs like us.”

Nigel nodded. “I know.”

“And if you really think this is your ‘true mate’ then….figure out if it’s worth it getting involved with a witch for the rest of your fucking life. You know what it was like with *her* , how she grew to hate you so much, and you…”

Nigel’s lip curled. “She wasn’t mine.”

“No, but you thought she was. Are you ready to be wrong again?”

He closed his eyes. “Why did I fucking call you at all?”

“I don’t know? Cuz you have no friends in the states?”

“I have friends,” he growled, “I have Hannibal, and…”

“What’s a vampire gonna do for you, huh? He’s got no idea what it’s like to be an animal, not like me.”

Nigel smiled. “No, not like you.”

“So…I’m all you’ve got.”

He opened his eyes, and looked at the door again.

“For now.”

“Nigel…”

“Goodnight, Brother,” he mumbled, “Try not to get in any trouble.”

“Nigel, wait one fucking second. If you…”

Nigel ended the call, and turned off his phone. He didn’t need Darko’s help on this. He didn’t have a mate, and never wanted one.

Not like Nigel.

He got up off the ground, his whole body aching, and headed for the kitchen. His ice box was barely full, but he found some just shy of expired bacon that he cooked up fast. The meat made him feel better, his wolf sated, and he took a shower before getting dressed.

The bar wasn't open till dusk, so he had time to head down to the corner store and maybe even the little bakery. The ladies there always gave him free shit, and nothing in the house seemed like enough.

Nigel left fast, still shaken, and headed for the bakery first. Mrs. Baker smiled as he walked inside.

"Nigel! How are you?"

He smiled. "I'm good Mrs. B, though I am a bit hungry. You have any…"

"I've kept something just for you! I'll be right back!"

Nigel grinned. "You knew I was coming, Darling?" he teased, "Maybe today I wouldn't hit you up for more of those tasty bacon things."

She giggled and came back with a box that she handed right to him. He opened and his mouth watered at the maple bacon donuts inside. "Oh silly," she said, "You come every Tuesday!"

He blinked.

It was Tuesday, wasn't it?

His whole system had gotten messed up by that witch last night, and yet here he was still doing things without thought.

“Thank you, Mrs. B,” he said, looking inside, “How much do I…”

“You look hungry, Nigel,” she said, “Just take them. I have plenty.”

“No, I…”

Mrs. Baker reached out to touch his hand. “You look tired too, dear. Are you ok?”

Nigel frowned. “I’m just fine.”

“If there’s…”

“Thanks for these,” he mumbled, “I…I’ve gotta go.”

Nigel rushed out, donuts in hand, and bit into one as soon as he stepped back into the cold. It tasted just fine, a little stale but fine, and he ate two of the four before he even got near the corner store, aka Larry’s.

He was still eating when he walked inside, and nodded to the pink haired girl at the counter he didn’t recognize. She barely looked up from her phone, and he grabbed a basket ready to buy a few things to keep him through the week before he had to go to a real store.

There was cheap pre-packaged sliced meat along with some decent beer near the coolers that he grabbed along with some bread. Several times the door made noise as he looked, but he didn’t pay all that much attention.

That was until he smelled it.

“Oh…fuck,” he growled, looking up.

The witch.

He stood in the doorway, looking oddly lost, and when he saw Nigel his eyes lit up. Nigel felt frozen as he got closer, and the minute the witch was beside him his whole body felt like it was on fire.

“Hello Nigel,” the witch said, “I didn’t think I would see you again, though something told me to come here.”

Nigel’s throat felt dry as he looked at him. “I…”

“This is a grocery store?” he asked, looking down, “None of that looks very good.”

He dropped his basket. “I don’t…I…who are you?”

“Adam,” the witch said, “Adam Raki, I…I don’t normally like to do things off hand like this, but I just moved here and my schedule isn’t the same. I need to make a new one, which will be hard, but I…I think…I think because it’s you it doesn’t…”

Suddenly a bag of chips flew across the room and burst open when it hit the wall.

“Oh shit!” the pink haired girl said, “Who did that?”

Adam frowned. “I need to leave, I…I need…” he closed his eyes, “I don’t feel well.”

Nigel grabbed his wrist. “St-steady,” he said, his voice shaking, “Don’t want to…scare them.”

Adam nodded. “I…I’m still learning how to…control it, and…”

Nigel left his basket on the floor and started to walk Adam toward the door.

“I can tell,” he said, the warmth between them making him sweat, “You really need to…be careful.”

The cold weather outside made him feel a bit better, and when he got Adam away from the windows he let him go.

“Thank you.”

“You shouldn’t be here during the day,” Nigel said, “It’s busy, and there’s a lot…”

“I work at home,” Adam said, “I decided to find new places to replace my old ones at home, so things…I need a schedule, it…helps.”

Nigel frowned. “Because you’re a witch?”

Adam looked away, rubbing his wrist where Nigel touched. “No.”

“Oh, that’s…what’s next?”

“More looking, but…I don’t know where to go, and…it’s very…different.”

Nigel squeezed his hand tight in order to stop the urge to touch Adam again.

“I…I can show you where to go.”

Adam looked up. “You can?”

“I’ve lived here for years, I…I know my way around and…you need someone who knows what you are, right?”

“My superiors know I’m half witch,” Adam said, “I…I need to get inside, I’m getting cold.”

“You have a car?”

“I’ve been walking,” Adam whispered, “I…I have a car, yes, but…I’m not…I don’t feel well. I think it’s a bad idea to be doing this today. I don’t work today, but…”

He knew it was a mistake even before the words came out of his mouth.

“You can come to my place, and…tell me where you need to go. I’ll give you some places, and you…you won’t have to go anywhere.”

“I don’t know where you live.”

Nigel suddenly felt like he needed a cigarette, he looked around, nearly growling as people looked at them. “Or I can go to your place, whatever…”

“Okay.”

He turned to Adam. “Okay?”

“Yes,” Adam said, “You can come to my apartment, it’s not far.”

Nigel let out a long breath. “Alright.”

They began to walk back where Nigel had come from then, though he had to dig his nails into his palms to keep from grabbing Adam’s hand. Every time someone came near Adam, Nigel flashed his eyes at them, and by the time they got to their building he knew he’d have to tell Adam they were neighbors.

“It’s just up here.”

He grabbed one of his last two donuts, biting down, and as they walked up the stairs he looked at Adam fully.

What a lithe little witch he was, slender hips and plush fucking gorgeous ass. He was sweating by the time they got to their floor, and Adam turned just as Nigel finished his donut.

“Adam,” he said, “I…I have…”

He frowned. “What?”

Nigel pointed at the door. “That apartment there.”

“Yes?”

“I live there.”

Adam frowned. “No, you don’t.”

Nigel smiled. “Yes, I do.”

“No, you…the man I saw there didn’t look anything like you. He went inside, and…”

Nigel frowned. “Darling, I assure you I live *right there* .”

Adam shook his head. “No, I…”

He dropped his donut box on the ground and went over to unlock his door. It opened with ease, and he turned to see Adam looking even more confused.

“See?”

“But…I…do you have a roommate?”

“No.”

“I saw a man arguing with a vampire, it…they were right there.”

Nigel looked at his door. “A vampire?”

“Yes, just yesterday.”

He frowned. “A dark haired vamp?,” he asked, lifting his hand up, “ About this high?”

“Yes.”

Nigel closed his door, and locked it. “I slept with a vamp about two weeks ago, but no one last night. I was at the bar.”

Adam looked upset.

“I…I don’t understand.”

“Darling…”

He reached out for his hand and Adam pulled back. “I think…I think I need to be alone.”

“Adam, wait! Just…”

Adam opened his door fast, and ran inside without saying a word. Nigel’s wolf clawed at him, practically howling for him to knock down Adam’s door. A deep rejection started to almost burn into him and he growled, grabbing his box as he ran down the stairs.

Whatever had just happened was a mistake.

How could he let the weird fucking allure some witch had make him so stupid?

He chucked the box in the garbage and went to find his bike. The familiar feel as he climbed on, and started it up with ease made him calm again.

“Fucking witches,” he growled, hating the rejected ache that seemed to settle inside him.

Nigel wasn’t gonna make this mistake again.

Not again.

As he drove off he tried not to think about the way Adam had looked so lost before he'd run into the apartment.

But no matter how much he wanted to help him find his way Nigel knew he couldn't.

Witches were nothing but trouble.

Chapter 3

Adam's day was completely thrown off kilter by Nigel telling him they were neighbors. He broke four drinking glasses, burnt his macaroni for lunch, and found it hard to calm down.

Something was wrong.

The man he'd seen at Nigel's apartment didn't share his face, he remembered that clearly, and he also knew he'd wanted to know more about him from just seconds of seeing his face.

What did that mean?

Adam didn't have anyone to talk to about magic, no one at all, and the fear that set in as he struggled not to let his magic run wild made it hard for him to focus. He tried to call Harlan, but got no answer, and ended up rewatching Tower of Babel videos until he got so tired he could barely keep his eyes open.

He curled up on the couch, shaking as the burning brought tears to his eyes, and passed out completely.

The first dream he had was about the wolf again.

They were on his bed, curled up, and Adam had his face pressed to the wolf's fur as he ran his fingers through.

"I like having you here," he whispered, "I…I've never…you make me feel stronger."

The wolf moved closer to him, burying its face into his neck, and he hugged it tight.

“Don’t leave until I fall asleep,” he said, his voice shaking, “Please?”

He felt the wolf lick his neck, and shivered.

“Thank you.”

Adam woke with tears on his face, his body calm again, and rolled out of bed.

He looked at the time, and rushed to find a frozen dinner to eat.

His schedule still wasn’t right, but it was close, and as he waited for it to cook he thought about Nigel.

Had the two men he saw in the hallway really been just a vision?

Adam had never had a vision, though his father said Mother had them, and as he pulled the dinner out he remembered the wolf.

Was that a vision?

He thought it might be.

Adam pulled up another Tower of Babel video, one of his favorites, and frowned when he saw a new one.

Dreams and Visions : Is Your Magic Trying to Tell You Something?

He clicked it, chest aching, and took his first bite.

The disembodied voice Tower of Babel used made him feel calm, and as he watched him do a tarot spread he got lost in the video.

“We all dream, don’t we? Dreams can mean all kinds of things, or sometimes nothing at all. Witches don’t always have that luxury. Even the most simple dream could be trying to tell you something. I remember my first important one. There was a lake, the water too dark to see, and I was walking out to it. I knew there was something there that needed my attention, and I swam underwater until I found a box. There was a man inside, and he’d been there for a very long time. The man was happy to see me in my dream, and kissed me. I felt his touch like a brand.

The next morning I let my magic lead me to a lake, and took a swim. The box was there, chained underwater, and I knew the man was inside. But I didn’t open it. I knew I was not supposed to, not yet. I swam to shore, shaking, and sat there for hours as the sun went down. I went back under, the icy water making me shiver, and opened the box. The man was not happy to see me, not at all, and attacked me. He was a vampire, and I fought him off leaving him for dead. My magic recoiled at this fight, and…it left him with a scar.

This vampire is still important to me.

But I’m still not as important to him.”

Adam frowned.

He closed the video, his food gone, and went to look out his peephole.

Nigel wasn’t there.

Adam’s hands felt warm as he watched, and felt an urge to get in his car.

His magic wanted to take him somewhere.

He got dressed, hands shaking, and left his apartment to go to the car. The minute he pulled away from the parking lot his hands were burning, and he drove faster, unable to stop. Adam felt like he woke out of a dream when he stopped, and looked up to see he was at the forest preserve.

It was dark, a bit too dark really, but he got out to look up at the stars.

They were easy to see here, the sky clear, and he found himself calm at last just basking in the view.

A low growl started him out of his daze, and to his surprise he saw the large wolf from his dreams.

Adam froze, unsure of what to do, but the burn in his hands returned as the wolf came closer.

The wolf was beautiful, gray and white with eyes that glowed yellow the closer it came.

He held out his hand and touched it's nose, and the whine he got made him relax.

"Hello," he said, "I…I've had dreams about you."

The wolf nuzzled his hand twice and he pet it again.

"I've never liked dogs," he said, "But…you're very soft and I like how it feels to be around you."

The wolf came closer, burying its nose in his neck and licking. He laughed.

“Are you a werewolf?” he asked, “Or just a wolf? Because it’s rude not to tell me you’re a werewolf.”

The wolf moved back, shaking its nose, and Adam reached for it again but it backed away.

“I’m sorry, you…you don’t have to tell me,” he said, “I…I’ve just been very lost since I moved away from home and this is the first time I’ve felt ok. Pl..please don’t go.”

The wolf turned and walked off, making Adam blink back tears and close his eyes tight.

His hands burned again, and he squeezed them so tight his nails dug into his palms.

“No one stays,” he whispered, his voice shaking, “No one…no one…”

Adam heard a deep howl and opened his eyes to see the wolf watching him from just near the trees. It turned its head twice, as if telling him to follow. He wiped his face with his hands, sniffling.

Should he follow?

It felt like he should, and his magic had led him here.

Adam put his hand in his pocket, and felt his cell phone there. He could easily call someone if something happened.

Right?

He headed over to the trees, and the wolf bumped his hand again. He pet it slowly, and was rewarded a lick for his trouble.

“You want to take me somewhere?”

The wolf grabbed at his shirt with its teeth and Adam let himself be pulled, gripping tight to the wolf’s back fur as they headed into the woods. He knew it was dangerous, reckless really, but Tower of Babel had said before “let you magic lead” and for once he felt like his was calm.

This was where he was supposed to be.

Adam let the wolf lead him out into a small clearing, and it laid down staring up at a large opening in the trees. He looked up at the stars and smiled.

“I like it here,” he said, “The stars are so bright.”

The wolf made a noise, hitting its foot on the ground, and Adam frowned.

“You want me to lay down with you? I…I don’t like dirt and…I can’t stay long.”

It whined, and howled a little making him smile. “I can sit for a minute,” he said, sitting down, “But…”

The wolf pulled him down and he landed laying on its back.

“Don’t do that!” Adam yelled, hitting the wolf angrily, “I didn’t like it!”

It whined, licking his cheek, and he frowned. “If you are a werewolf that was very rude and I’m not happy.”

The wolf licked his cheek again.

Adam looked up at the sky, and the stars made him tear up. “I miss home,” he said, “I…I don’t like not knowing what to do here. I don’t…I don’t like not having my schedule and…”

The wolf curled up and he felt its fur warm him.

“Thank you,” he said, petting, “I’m sorry I hit you.”

It licked his cheek.

“This is very nice,” he said, “And you’re very warm. I like seeing the stars, it reminds me of my father….and sometimes my mother. My father said my mother used to call me Star when I was small, but I don’t remember it. That’s what made me like them so much, because I felt closer to her. ”

Adam put his hands up, and frowned. “That’s why this is so nice,” he sighed, “If I had a hold on my magic I could make us a fire, but…I’m still not sure.”

The wolf curled in closer, and he felt oddly tired.

“I can’t sleep here,” he sighed, “But…I like this.”

He sat there, watching the stars, and the wolf just cradled him in its fur.

“I don’t know why I’m here,” he said, his voice shaking, “But…I’m happy I found you.”

The wolf nuzzled his cheek.

“And if you are a werewolf,” he said, his eyes growing heavy, “It’s very rude not to show your face.”

Adam got a lick for that, and he pet the wolf’s nose as he kept trying to keep his eyes open.

“I can’t sleep here,” he said again, “But…I want to.”

Another whine, and the wolf nudged his cheek as if telling him to close his eyes.

“I…I think I need to leave.”

The wolf’s fur seemed to pull him in, and he closed his eyes.

“You’re very soft,” he whispered, “So soft….”

Adam didn’t remember falling asleep, but he woke up in his bed the next morning. He frowned, checking his phone, and realized he’d woken before his alarm.

How had he gotten home?

He turned to get out of bed and saw his pants were all dirty.

Whoever had taken him home they hadn’t changed his clothes.

Adam waited for his alarm, shaking, and looked around for some clue. Had the wolf taken him home? How had it gotten into his apartment?

His alarm went off a minute later, and he went right to take a shower.

All the dirt from last night came off him but still he felt much better today than yesterday. What happened with the wolf had helped him, and he didn't know why. He got dressed, had cereal, and went to start his work day.

He had plenty of calls, mostly rude people who didn't know enough about computers, and just before he took a lunch break a familiar voice made him pause.

"It's happening again," the man said, his accent familiar, "This stupid fucking register is garbage and if you're about to tell me this is a computer help line like the last asshole did when I last called. I called the company who makes this and they directed me to this number. So how the fuck do I fix it?"

Adam frowned. "This is a computer help line, Sir."

The man cursed again. "I fucking know that! But they told me you'll know how to fix it and I can't make a damn sale if the thing won't stay on!"

He tried to remember what he'd read yesterday.

"Is the blue light on?"

The man paused. "Yes?"

"Did you unplug the machine, sir?"

“Why the fuck would that work? You said it’s not a fucking computer, didn’t you?”

“Unplug the machine.”

“I swear to fuck, if…”

He heard a loud banging on the other line, and a yell.

“There!” the man said, “I’ve turned the thing off.”

“Can I get your name, Sir?” he asked, “I didn’t get your name yesterday and I get paid for every person I help. May I please have your name?”

“My…why the hell would I do that? You didn’t fix anything!”

Adam frowned. “Even if I don’t help, I’m still doing my job.”

“Well, that’s just perfect for you, Darling. Isn’t it? You…”

“Plug it back in, Sir,” Adam said, his hands shaking, “Right now.”

“I…” the man said, pausing, “Are you angry with me?”

“Yes.”

“I…I apologize,” he sighed, “I’ve had a rough night. I didn’t…I’m not normally such a…”

“Plug the machine in, Sir,” Adam repeated, “Now.”

The man made some noise, and he waited for a response. Adam’s day hadn’t been great either, but this man’s rudeness was oddly more upsetting than the rest. He heard a happy laugh.

“It’s working!” he said, laughing, “It’s fucking working! You…Darling, what’s your name? I want to send you some fucking roses! This…”

“I need your name, Sir,” Adam said, “Please.”

A pause. “I…yes. It’s Nigel,” the man said, “Lupescu.”

Adam froze. “Nigel?”

“Yes, that’s what I said. Do you need me to spell it?”

Adam’s hands felt warm as he shook his head. “No, Sir,” he said softly, “I…I can spell it. Thank you for using Computer Helpers.”

He ended the call, and let out several long breaths.

It could’ve been another Nigel.

The name wasn’t that uncommon, and despite how Adam felt he couldn’t be sure.

Adam got up from his desk, shaken, and started to make lunch only to suddenly break a glass without touching anything. He closed his eyes, took more breaths, and thought about Nigel.

The instant relief he felt made him worry, but he was able to make lunch without incident.

The rest of his day he took several breaks, checking the hall for Nigel, and went back to work without any sightings.

He didn't leave the house all day, but the wait for Nigel was what kept him going.

A loud curse at half past eleven made him jump up from the couch as he watched his Tower of Babel video. Nigel was in the hallway, fumbling with keys, and Adam opened the door without thinking.

"Nigel?"

He turned around so fast he dropped his keys again.

"Adam," he said, licking his lips, "I…I didn't think you'd still be awake."

Adam didn't move. "I don't go to bed until midnight," he said, "I didn't think you'd be home so early. Does the bar not stay open late today?"

Nigel scratched at his neck and scoffed. "It's the first full moon, Darling."

He frowned.

"Does that bother you? I don't know much about werewolves."

Nigel sighed. "It's…complicated, Adam. I'd tell you now but I really need to be…away."

“Oh.”

“It’s not that I don’t want to talk to you, Star, but…”

Adam blinked. “Star? Why did you call me that?”

Nigel froze, and grabbed his keys off the floor, turning around. “I…I’m not sure, Darling, it just…Adam I really do have to go.”

“Nigel, were you…”

Nigel opened his door fast, and ran inside leaving Adam to stare in confusion. He closed his door, and walked out to the balcony to look outside. The moon wasn’t very strong tonight, and contrary to what most people thought it wasn’t a ‘true’ full moon until the third day. This was just the start, though he didn’t know how it affected werewolves.

“Star,” he said, staring at his hands.

Was Nigel the wolf from last night?

He had to be, right?

Adam held up his hands, and stared up at the sky.

The moon made him feel calmer, just like the wolf did, and when he closed his eyes he could almost smell the forest. A loud howl made him startle, looking over at his door.

Had Nigel shifted or was that someone else?

Adam shook his head and sighed looking up again.

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do,” he whispered, “I…”

His alarm went off and he pulled out his phone.

It was midnight.

Adam turned to go back inside, and closed the windows. He turned off every light one by one, and paused at the last. His magic was calm, but a little unsteady, and he centered it at the bulb.

And to his delight it shut off.

He smiled as he headed for his bedroom.

The last twenty four hours had been strange, but he felt like something good was coming. He just hoped it would come soon.

Chapter 4

The next two days were a blur for Nigel.

He chained himself to the radiator every night, howling in his werewolf form, and in the morning slept like the fucking dead. The exhaustion of his wolf wanting to be closer to Adam again was the hardest, and he almost called Darko but knew what he'd say.

Kill the witch.

The very thought made him want to rip Darko's head off, which was why he didn't leave his house those first two days at all.

Adam worked from home, he'd told him so the first time they'd met, and the temptation to be close to him only grew worse as the full moon nights drew more full. He drank way too fucking much the day of the second full moon, collapsing under the weight of it, but the morning of the third no amount of alcohol seemed to matter.

He substituted one vice for another, smoking every cigarette he had, and yet even the slight scent of Adam from across the hall made his wolf scratch at the door like a bitch in heat.

What the fuck was wrong with him?

Nigel didn't know what he was going to do tonight if the wolf overpowered his senses. The thought of hurting Adam, even a little, made him want to claw his eyes out.

No.

He couldn't do this.

Nigel pulled out his phone, whole body aching, and dialed the only person who might be able to help him.

“Nigel?”

“Hey there Shovel Man,” he said, his voice shaking, “I know it’s still early to talk to Fangs but…”

“It’s too early? Nigel it’s not even noon. What’s wrong?”

Nigel sighed, throwing a hand over his eyes. “I’m fucked, Will. Fucking *fucked* .”

Will paused. “Did you kill someone?”

He laughed. “I wish.”

“Ok, I really don’t understand what’s going on, and if you really need to talk to Hannibal I’ll let him know. Okay?”

Nigel liked Will, he really did, but despite what he’d helped him and Hannibal do he didn’t exactly fancy the idea of humiliating himself in front of him. Will was a vamp mate, sure, but he didn’t understand shit like instinct.

Not like Fangs.

“That’s just fine, Shovel Man,” he said, his voice wavering just a little, “I…I must’ve lost my head.”

Will paused again. “If you really need help now, I can come.”

“And leave your husband? What a terrible protector you are.”

“Nigel, c’mon I’m trying to…”

“Tell Fangs to call me later. Bye.”

Nigel hung up with a sigh, and buried his face into the couch cushions. His whole body ached, claws already popping, and he was sweating worse than when the moon was high in the sky.

This wasn’t normal, none of it was, and he knew he’d have to call Darko eventually.

He forced himself to get up off the couch, teeth aching to tear into something, and walked to the ice box just as a knock came to his door. Nigel froze and tried to tell himself it was someone other than the one person it shouldn’t be.

“Nigel?”

Nigel slammed his ice box shut, and ran to the door but stopped, rolling against it with his back as his fangs dropped.

“Star, I…I…I can’t…talk.”

“I know it’s not a good day to see you,” Adam said through the door, his voice making Nigel’s wolf want to howl, “But I read a lot about full moons and werewolves so I got you some things for tonight. I know you can’t leave the house, and didn’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

He closed his eyes tight. “Adam, I can’t.”

“I’ll go now, but I just wanted you to have enough to last you the night. Can I talk to you when you’re better?”

Nigel let out a long breath. “I…yes. That’s fine.”

“Ok, I’ll go. I hope the full moon isn’t too hard on you, Nigel.”

Nigel slid down the door, his whole body thrumming, and he felt his wolf strangely settle. The idea of seeing Adam later instead of now seemed to subdue it, and he listened to Adam’s steps before the door closed before opening his own.

There was a box there, closed with intense precision, and he pulled it in with him before locking up again.

He could’ve cried at what was inside.

Steaks, water, wet wipes, and cigarettes.

Adam had gotten him fucking cigarettes. How had he even known Nigel smoked? He’d made sure not to smoke in front of him before.

Nigel buried his face in the box and smelled the slightest tinge of Adam’s scent, and his wolf whined as he put everything away but cooked a few steaks to tide him over. He ate Adam’s steaks, two of the six he’d gotten, and drank almost an entire bottle of apple juice.

It was the best fucking thing he’d ever eaten in his entire life.

His cock got harder the longer he ate, desire building, and when he was done he laid back on the couch and jerked off with his eyes tightly shut thinking of Adam.

Adam had gotten him supplies without even fucking knowing him for more than a few days.

He wanted Nigel to be safe and happy.

Nigel moaned, stroking his cock, and when a sudden gush of something wet came out of his ass he groaned.

“What the fu…”

He stuck two fingers into his hole, and stared at the discharge on them.

“Fuck *me* .”

The discharge was sticky, thick, and when he smelled it Nigel shivered. What the fuck was happening to him?

He got up with a start, still hard as a rock, and went right to the shower. The wet slick seeped down his ass and he fought to ignore it, while the thought of Adam kept making him want to jerk off more. This was his last night with this crap, really, and he deserved the release. He leaned his forehead against the tile wall, closing his eyes, and began to stroke his cock again. The memory of Adam’s scent got him more and more desperate until he couldn’t resist any longer. He pressed two fingers into his wet waiting hole, groaning at the feel, and imagined Adam fucking him. He cried out, coming so hard against the tile he got lightheaded, and stood there panting for breath as the sensations subsided.

Nigel had never had a preference for positions when it came to sex, not really, but he’d also never come so hard in his entire life.

He washed off after, exhausted, and grabbed the box from the ground tearing it into pieces before taking a part and bringing it to his nose. Nigel fell asleep that way, the piece tight in his hand, and when he woke it was because the moon decided to shine right in his fucking window. Nigel groaned, sitting up, and stared at his already half shifted form.

The urge to shift completely was there, right on the edge, but he ignored it long enough to pull another pack of steaks from the ice box. He tore open the package, snarling, and bit into the raw meat just as he felt his shift take over.

Nigel was usually completely aware when he shifted, though his sight was more in brighter tones and scent amplified by a million. He didn't feel that way now, sniffing the floor, and when he saw the open window he couldn't resist any longer.

It was illegal to shift in public, had been since the Reveal what was over twenty years ago now, and yet as he jumped down the fire escape none of that mattered. He followed the scent, desperate to be close, and when someone screamed at the sight of him he just snarled snapping his jaws as he ran up the other side of the building.

He clawed at the window when the scent stopped, whining, and when it opened he licked Adam's fingers.

"Hello. It's nice to see you again. Do you want to come inside? It's cold and you can get into a lot of trouble."

Nigel crawled into the window, flopping down onto the floor, and whined as Adam touched his head.

"Hello, Nigel," he said, "You could have asked me to come over earlier."

He nuzzled Adam's knee, and pulled a little on his shirt to make him go to the couch. Adam sat down and Nigel laid on his lap, petting him more.

“This is very strange,” he said, “Not like the books said. But it’s still very nice anyway.”

Nigel sighed, and fought not to let his wolf take over.

He didn’t win.

He woke up the next morning in Adam’s bed, completely naked, and Adam was sound asleep beside him. Nigel stared at him for what felt like forever, longing to touch, and forced himself to get up instead.

Nigel ached all over as he got up, groaning, and Adam opened his eyes.

“Nigel?”

He covered his cock with both hands. “Um…”

Adam sat up, rubbing his eyes. “It’s still not time to wake up yet,” he sighed, “We can sleep longer, if you’d like.”

Nigel blinked.

“Adam, I’m completely fucking naked in your bedroom.”

“I know, but you can shift again and we can lay together. I’m not sure if you’re physically attracted to me, but laying together is not a sexual activity.”

Nigel looked around the room. “Star, this is the part where you’re supposed to be upset with me.”

He laid down with a sigh, and his sleepy eyes started to drift closed. “I knew it was you,” he said, “And you didn’t hurt me. We just laid together and I fed you lots of beef jerky. You really seemed to like it, and it was all I had in the house.”

“Adam…”

Adam closed his eyes. “I’m going back to bed,” he whispered, “But please go out the fire escape again so the door is locked. Anyone can come in otherwise.”

Nigel stood there, staring as Adam fell right back to sleep, and smiled.

He shifted without a thought, climbed back into Adam’s bed, and curled up beside him. Adam pulled him closer, burying his face into Nigel’s fur, and he licked his cheek.

“I like this.”

Three words that held so much fucking meaning.

Nigel liked this too.

Way, way too much.

But for now, he didn’t want to think about it.

Adam was happy, and so was he.

Nigel felt Adam’s palm warm against his side before he buried his snout into Adam’s neck. The scent there was so strong he wanted to drown in it, and as he fell asleep again his tail wagged behind him.

His wolf was happy too.

Chapter 5

After Nigel's visit, they got into a routine.

Adam worked during the day, though he had breaks in between, and when Nigel got up around mid-afternoon he'd come see him. He didn't use the window to visit most of the time, he would just knock at the door and go right to the bathroom. Having a very large wolf walk around his apartment should have been odd for him, he knew that, but Nigel's presence made him calmer.

He knew he made Nigel calmer too.

They didn't talk about it, just enjoying each other's presence, and most of the time Nigel would shift back and go home to go to work.

Most of the time.

This went on for almost two weeks, until one afternoon Nigel didn't come. Adam waited for him, expecting a visit, but when afternoon turned to evening with nothing, he finally left his apartment to knock on Nigel's door.

There was no response.

Adam knocked until his knuckles were red, tears in his eyes, and finally went back home to try to calm down. Maybe Nigel didn't want to see him anymore. They weren't dating, or even friends. He didn't owe Adam anything.

He could barely sit still while eating dinner, and watching his Tower Of Babel video didn't even help. Adam broke two glasses when he tried to get some juice, and started to cry when he couldn't fix them.

That was why he decided to go see Nigel at the bar.

It wasn't a far drive, but it wasn't nearby either, though the closer he got to it the calmer he became. Adam parked, still shaking, and walked into what seemed like a loud event. There were more people in here than last time, much much more, and when he looked for Nigel he saw no one behind the bar.

Adam sat at the bar, after finding one open stool, and tried not to panic.

He felt that Nigel was here, had to be, and though the full moon wasn't for days he wondered if that was why Nigel hadn't come to visit him. Adam sighed, hands burning, and felt a tear run down his cheek.

All he wanted to do was go home.

Adam was about to get up and leave when someone touched his back.

“You seem lost.”

He turned to see the witch from the last time he was here.

The Other Adam.

“I…I shouldn’t be here.”

A loud yelp as someone grabbed a young man and nibbled his neck openly drawing blood made Adam’s eyes widen. The Other Adam sighed. “No, you really shouldn’t be, but you’re here now and…”

“Star?”

Adam turned around fast and saw Nigel standing on the other side of the bar.

“Nigel.”

“What are you doing here?!”

He frowned. “You didn’t come over.”

Nigel looked down, scratching his cheek, and handed someone a glass. “I…I had things to do, Adam, you know?” he tried to yell over the noise, “It’s a busy night!”

Adam’s chest hurt. “Oh.”

“And you probably don’t need me to…”

He got up off his stool in tears, turning fast as he practically ran out of the bar.

His hands hurt as he tried to open his car, dropping the keys, and when he went to grab them someone got there first.

The pale blonde man’s eyes were dark blue, and his fangs were the longest Adam had ever seen.

Though he hadn’t met many vampires.

“Drop something, little mouse?”

“Those are mine,” he said, frowning, “Please give them to me.”

The vampire smiled, leaning in close. “You don’t want to come inside? I’m sure I can give you a reason to stay. Pretty thing like you going to waste on a night like this is a crime.”

“GIVE ME MY KEYS!” Adam yelled, shaking as the windshields of the two cars parked on both sides of him shattered.

The vampire’s eyes widened, and he went to give him the keys just as a loud growl made them both turn. Nigel was completely shifted, his clothes torn, and the vampire backed away

from Adam slowly.

“Hey, Nigel…I didn’t….”

Nigel ran at him, knocking the vampire down, and the vampire screamed just as Nigel went for his neck.

“Stop.”

He stopped, lifting his mouth, and whined as Adam came closer.

“He didn’t hurt me,” Adam whispered, petting him, “I’m ok.”

Nigel licked Adam’s hand, and he smiled as the vampire scurried off away from them. Adam heard voices and looked up to see several people standing in the doorway of the bar. Other Adam was one of them.

“I think the bar is closed,” he said, “Time to go home, darlings.”

The massive exit of supernatural beings was a strange sight, though Nigel pulled on Adam’s wrist cuff toward the door. There was no one there when they went inside, and Adam locked the door before Nigel shifted back. He didn’t run, just sat in one of the booths and sighed covering his face.

“Fuck!”

Adam frowned. “Nigel?”

Nigel looked up at him and sighed. “Are you alright?”

He nodded. “I’m fine.”

“I heard you scream, and…I couldn’t…”

“Couldn’t what?”

“I couldn’t stop myself from shifting,” he growled, “I’ve never…that’s never happened to me before, Star. Not ever, and I’ve been alive for a long fucking time.”

Adam’s chest hurt. “I’m sorry.”

Nigel grabbed his hands. “No, no, it’s…it’s not that. I’m not angry with you, Adam.”

“You seem angry.”

He sighed. “I’m not sure what I am, Star,” he said, “Not really sure at all.”

Adam’s hands felt hot in Nigel’s, and the longer their skin touched the more he wanted.

“I got used to you coming to see me,” he confessed, “It’s…a part of my routine, and my schedule and…when you didn’t come I…I got upset.”

Nigel frowned. “Oh shit, Darling, I’m sorry.”

“No, no, you…you didn’t understand.”

“I’m a shit,” Nigel mumbled, “I…I must confess I didn’t come because there are times when I never want to leave.”

“Oh.”

“And it’s not right to…put my bullshit on you, Star. It’s not. You….”

“You can stay,” Adam said, unable to stop himself, “I…I wouldn’t be mad if you stayed. I have two bedrooms, and one goes unused.”

Nigel blinked. “Adam, no.”

“It’s ok,” Adam said, his voice shaking, “Then you wouldn’t have to sneak into my windows, and we’d both be much happier.”

“Would we? Darling, you don’t know me very well and I’m…obviously shit at getting to know you. I’d just make you hate me, and I can’t even…no. It’s a terrible idea, Darling, I’m sorry. I’ll…I’m just fine.”

He felt oddly rejected as Nigel let go of his hands and nodded. “Okay.”

Nigel slid out of his side of the booth. “I’m going to find something to put on, Star. Give me a moment.”

Adam watched Nigel rush from him, blinking at how fast he was, and when he had on a pair of sweatpants and sneakers when he returned. His bare chest was well muscled, just as Adam had seen on the morning of his full moon visit, and he felt his body grow warmer as he stared.

“Star?”

He looked up. “Oh, I…sorry I was…I’m not myself.”

Nigel frowned. “Are you hungry? I…I can make you something. I…I’ve got macaroni!”

He ran off again and Adam blinked back tears.

Why was he so upset?

Nigel didn’t want to move in with him, and that was fine. He barely knew Adam, other than the few times they’d cuddled together, and didn’t seem interested in getting to know him at all. His stomach growled, and he got up from the seat.

“Nigel? I’m going to go home now. I’m very…”

The speed in which Nigel came back holding a bowl of macaroni was impressive, and though he knew the last time he'd eaten Nigel's mac and cheese he hadn't liked it much until the end he still smiled.

"Thank you."

Nigel stared at him expectantly, eyes wide, and Adam picked up the fork to take a bite never looking away. He seemed to relax when Adam swallowed, licking his lips, and smiled.

"I like it."

"Good, good. Sit."

Adam sat down again, and ate every bite while Nigel watched him oddly interested.

"Was there a party tonight?" he asked, "That was a lot of people."

Nigel frowned. "Oh, that's…just a thing."

"A thing?"

"There are plenty of us in hiding around here," he said, licking his lips as Adam did the same, "My place is the only one around so it's open invitation once a month just to…do your thing."

"Biting and hurting people?"

Nigel's lip curled. "No, I'm not for that shit. Anything that happens at my place is voluntary. I wish you'd have let me bite that fucker's throat out."

Adam took three more bites and looked down to see he'd finished.

"You still can."

He blinked back at him, blushing, and shook his head. "That fucking waste of fang doesn't matter anymore."

Adam frowned. "I'm sorry if I upset you, and everyone left."

Nigel smiled. "It's fine, Star. I needed a break tonight anyway."

"Why?"

Nigel got up from his seat and hopped over the bar, patting the cash register. "This fucker right here's been giving me such a hard time lately."

Adam got up and stood on the other side of the bar. There was a large sticker on the side of the register with a name Adam recognized immediately. Tech5000.

He blinked.

“It *is* you.”

Nigel frowned. “What?”

Adam touched the register and it opened at once. Nigel grinned. “Neat trick, Star.”

“You called me to fix this,” he said, “I…I work for Tech Support. Nigel Lupescu. Remember?”

Nigel paled. “I…oh shit, Adam I…I didn’t mean to…”

“I’m not upset anymore,” Adam mumbled, squeezing his hands into fists, “I..I just wanted you to know it was me if you call again. You were very rude.”

“I know, Star, but—”

“People on customer service lines are only doing their best, and it’s not nice to yell at them.”

Nigel sighed, running fingers through his hair. “I…I know that.”

“Please don’t do it again.”

He looked away. “I…if I had known it was you, Adam, I wouldn’t have done it.”

“You shouldn’t do it at all.”

Nigel sighed. “I…I know.”

They were both quiet, as Adam looked at the time he got turned to go. “I should go. Goodnight, Nigel.”

“I can walk you to your car, Adam, if you’d just…wait one minute.”

Adam stopped, and Nigel hopped over the bar once again landing with ease. His muscles were oddly distracting suddenly, and Adam had to look away. Nigel was very handsome, he’d noticed even before he’d really *seen* him, but suddenly it was all he could notice.

He blushed, and looked away as Nigel unlocked the door.

The night air helped, and he tried not to be too close as Nigel walked him to his car. He opened the door and frowned at him. “Goodnight, Nigel.”

“Goodnight, Adam. I…I’m sure you don’t want me to come again, but if you’re not…I’m sure you’re busy with work or…”

Adam frowned. “I don’t work tomorrow.”

“Oh.”

“So, you can come over anytime you’d like.”

Nigel smiled. “I’ll be there.”

Adam got into his car, calmer now than he’d been all night, and Nigel shut the door.

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

The drive felt like it took much longer than it had going there, but when he got inside his doorway Adam turned to look at Nigel’s. It was quiet, though he knew Nigel wasn’t far behind, and though he’d never been inside Adam still didn’t like it.

He got inside his apartment, suddenly upset, and went right to bed.

Adam woke to the fire department bursting through his bedroom door.

“Sir! Sir you have to exit the building there’s a fire!”

He got up, half dressed, and was escorted out into the hall where he froze.

Nigel’s door was wide open, and men were running inside to a room in flames.

“Where is Nigel?” he asked, tears in his eyes, “That’s his apartment! Where is he? Is he ok?”

“Sir, everyone is outside. Please we can’t stay here!”

Adam fought being pulled down the stairs, and when he got outside a loud growl came as Nigel pushed the fireman away from him. “Get the fuck off him!”

He threw his arms around Nigel, shaking, and realized this was the first time they’d hugged skin to skin.

“Nigel, are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” he said, “I still don’t know how it started but I…I’m just fine.”

Adam looked over Nigel’s shoulder as he turned and saw the flames even from outside. He concentrated, trying to stop the fire, and when everything began to fade he felt exhaustion overtake him.

“Star? Star, hey…STOP!”

He blinked, frowning. “But…”

Nigel shook his head. “Don’t hurt yourself for me, Adam. Just…don’t.”

He nodded, and Nigel hugged him again as he chuckled. “I guess I am staying with you after all, huh?”

Adam froze and looked up at the dying flames.

Had he done this in his sleep?

Or had it just been an accident?

And why did the fact that Nigel was coming to stay make him so happy?

He clutched Nigel harder and sighed.

“I guess so.”

Chapter 6

Nigel sat on the floor of his temporary new bedroom, surrounded by five boxes.

Five boxes were all he'd been able to salvage out of the fire, mostly clothes, and a couple of books but that was fucking it. He'd lost his bed, his couch, and even his television.

He sighed and laid down on the floor staring up at the ceiling.

The sound of Adam's heart beating so close was the only thing keeping him calm. He'd helped bring in Nigel's boxes, seeming extremely upset, and once Nigel got everything, he locked himself in his bedroom.

Nigel wasn't exactly sure why, and his wolf whined at the separation, but he didn't push.

He grabbed his cell phone and called Darko.

"Did you kill him yet?"

Nigel's lip curled. "Fuck you."

Darko sighed. "If you didn't get rid of this little witch, then what…"

"There was a fire at my place last night."

Darko paused. "Are you shitting me?"

“Nope. Lost pretty much everything.”

“Fuck, brother I’m…wait. Where are you staying?”

Nigel sighed. “He…he has an extra room and…it’s just for a bit, it’s not…”

“Are you fucking kidding me, Brother? You were worried about yourself just days ago and now you moved in with him? What happens if he’s cast some sort of spell on you?”

“He’s not…it’s not like that.”

“No? Cuz he’s your *true mate* , yeah? You're gonna make him yours?”

Nigel’s wolf liked the sound of that, and he sighed. “Maybe he is, and maybe…maybe we…”

Darko sighed. “Nigel, you’ve done this before. You…you can’t…what if it goes wrong? What if…you get ready to…and he leaves you broken just like her?”

“I’ll still be here,” he said, his voice shaking, “If he needs me.”

Darko groaned. “Do I have to go there? Is that what it’s gonna take? One swipe of my fucking claw and…”

Nigel shot up off the floor, growling. “NO! If you even *think* of coming near him, I’ll kill you myself.”

The quiet on the other line made Nigel calm, and he focused on Adam’s heart while Darko’s uneven breathing came through the phone.

“You really are gone already, aren’t you?”

He ran a hand over his face, shaking, and his fangs were heavy in his mouth.

“I…I’m not gonna push,” he said, “But…I *know* , Brother. I know.”

Darko sighed. “I won’t stand in your way, but…I feel it’s a huge fucking mistake. I just… have this feeling.”

“It doesn’t feel like a mistake.”

“It didn’t with *her* either.”

The line went dead and Nigel shoved the phone into his pocket, suddenly itching for a cigarette. He’d only been in Adam’s place for a few hours, and had so much shit to do, but still it felt like a bad idea to leave. He walked across the hall and knocked on Adam’s door.

“Star?”

Adam didn’t answer.

“I’m gonna go out for a bit, and get a bed. If you need anything, I’ll leave my number on the ice box.”

He heard Adam’s heart beat a little faster, but there was no response even as he found a notebook laying on the couch. Nigel opened the first page, and saw Adam had drawn strange symbols inside.

Spells?

Gabi had always written her witchy shit out, the words a mess but still he could read them.

Nigel felt like this was important, and instead went back into his bedroom to tear out the back of a crap book he'd finished weeks ago. He wrote down his number and found a space shuttle magnet to keep it up on the ice box.

He sighed, and headed for the door only to hear footsteps.

"I bought you a bed," Adam said, making him turn, "It'll be here tomorrow. I…I owe you that."

Nigel frowned, coming closer. "Darling, you don't *owe* me anything. You didn't…"

He noticed Adam's eyes were red, as if he'd been crying. "I burnt your apartment down," Adam said, sniffling, "I know I did."

"Star, you don't know anything. They said it was faulty wires, and…"

Adam shook his head. "I wanted you to come stay," he said, "I…I was upset that…I know it was me. I…I could've hurt you if you'd been there and…"

Nigel came closer, his wolf whining to comfort Adam, and only took his hand.

"If it *was* you, Adam," he sighed, "It was an accident."

Adam sniffled, shaking his head. "My magic…it's unstable, and…it feels better around you. I don't understand why, and I know you…you don't…"

Nigel sighed. “Do you work today, Adam?”

“No,” he mumbled, “I told them about the fire, and I was given a day off. I’ll work on my next normal day off.”

He took Adam’s other hand in his. “I could use your help getting some things,” he lied, “We can go to the store, find some sheets for me. How big is my new bed?”

“You’re a big wolf,” Adam mumbled, “So I got a Queen bed. I can get a bigger one, but the room isn’t that big and…I want you to be able to move around.”

Nigel smiled. “Do you want to do a bit of shopping with me?”

“I don’t like shopping.”

“Ok but,” he repeated, “Do you want to do a bit of shopping with me?”

Adam looked up at him, and Nigel was taken aback by how gorgeous he was. He’d never seen anyone better looking, not in all his eighty years, and it killed him that Adam had no idea.

“Where would we go?”

“Perhaps…you can make a plan for our day? A schedule of where we’ll look, and breaks for lunch and such?”

Adam’s face brightened. “I can do that.”

“Good, I’ll…I think I’m gonna shift for a bit if that’s alright?”

He smiled. “Ok.”

Nigel went into the next room and took off everything before shifting to go back to Adam. He found him in the bedroom, computer in hand, and climbed up on the bed beside him. Nigel pressed his nose against Adam’s side, breathing in, and for a moment indulged in his scent.

It was all he had for now.

He knew it was a big commitment.

Mating.

He still remembered when he’d asked Gabi, the excitement in her eyes, and as the weeks grew closer to the full moon she’d backed off. She put it off for months, then years, and when he caught her fucking some piece of shit human he’d been unable to hold himself back.

So he’d run.

The things the WPA did to werewolves caught “acting out” were the stuff of nightmares.

Nigel could never go back there again, and at this point people thought he was dead anyway.

Now, as he lay breathing in Adam’s perfect scent and listening to his heart, he knew there’d be no point anyway.

This was home.

Adam babbled on, even typed up a list of places, and soon Nigel could hardly keep his eyes open. He was woken by Adam’s voice.

“Nigel, it’s getting late so I’m going to make lunch now.”

He opened his eyes, startled, and to his shock realized he’d somehow shifted back again. Nigel pulled the sheets up over his lower half and blushed. “Um…fuck. Sorry, I wasn’t…”

Adam frowned. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m naked in your bed, Adam.”

“I know,” Adam said, standing, “You were tired and fell asleep.”

“Yes, but…”

Adam looked away as Nigel got out of his bed.

“You can shift again, or I can go get your clothes. I would’ve gotten them sooner and brought them here but I thought you liked to be nude.”

Nigel laughed. “It’s not about my liking, Darling,” he said with a sigh, “It’s about you.”

“I like having you here, and…nudity doesn’t bother me.”

He licked his mouth, watching Adam’s back, and resisted the urge to press.

“That doesn’t mean it’s alright, Darling, not…not if…”

“Not if what?”

“It’s getting late, Star,” Nigel mumbled, trying to get past him, “We should…”

Adam grabbed his arm and he froze, though Adam made no move to turn. The warmth of Adam’s palm made Nigel’s wolf claw at him to get out, and he resisted the urge to shift once again.

“Not if *what,* Nigel?”

He let out a long breath. “Not if we’re just friends.”

Adam pulled his arm back fast. “Oh.”

Nigel made no move to say more, rushing from Adam’s bedroom to his own temporary one. He closed the door, leaning against the wood, and closed his eyes.

The close quarters with Adam made him calm, and his wolf happier, but the longer he was here the more he knew he’d have to say something. Adam didn’t seem to be interested in him as anything more than a magical buffer, which despite how much it might hurt, was something he knew he’d do.

It just might take a bit longer for him to get his instincts to be under control first.

He let out several breaths, calming himself, and went to dress quickly. Adam’s heart beat didn’t waver the entire time he was behind the doors, but when he came out to find him cooking he admired from afar.

Adam’s movements seemed to go like clockwork, memory made he was sure, and when he saw him begin to stir what smelled like macaroni Nigel smiled.

“Is that your favorite?”

He looked up, frowning. “Yes.”

Nigel came over, staying just an arm’s length away, and watched Adam pour the bowls.

“I’ve never had much of a liking for it,” he said, “Though yours smells good.”

“You don’t have to eat it.”

Nigel took the bowl, dipped his spoon, and the burst of flavor on his tongue made him bite back a growl.

This was the best thing he’d ever tasted.

“It’s…good.”

“Thank you.”

Nigel looked at Adam, who still didn’t smile back. “Is there something wrong, Adam?”

Adam took a bite, and went to sit down at the table. The laptop was there, and the sound of a monotone voice talking made Nigel frown.

“I like watching this when I eat.”

“I see.”

“I…he helps me.”

“He?”

“Tower Of Babel,” Adam said, not looking at him, “He’s a witch, like me. Maybe not like me, he’s probably very good at controlling his magic.”

Nigel ate slower as he watched Adam, hardly paying attention to the voice, and could tell something was wrong. Had he said something? He couldn’t remember saying anything wrong before he left the bedroom.

“There’s a store right down the street called Home Things. I’ve never been there, or any of the places on my list, but…they have nice things.”

“Alright.”

“Though really you…” Adam paused, “Nevermind.”

Nigel grabbed his hand on the table. “What is it?”

He had tears in his eyes. “No.”

“Adam…”

Adam yanked his hand back and yelled. “NO!”

Nigel heard several things break around the room and stood up fast, grabbing Adam from behind. He put his arms around him, and nuzzled his cheek. “Shh….”

“I don’t…I’m sorry I don’t…”

He sighed. “We don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to, Star. Nothing at all.”

Adam sniffled. “I don’t know why I’m like this,” he whispered, his voice shaking, “Why I… feel safe one minute and upset the next. I don’t…I don’t want to…”

Nigel turned the chair fast, and Adam’s tears made him ache.

“There’s nothing wrong with you.”

“Yes, there is! Witches and humans aren’t…they’re not meant to…” Adam looked down, tears flowing, and Nigel lifted his chin.

“If you’re going to say that you shouldn’t have been born,” he whispered, kneeling down, “That’s a load of bulslhit.”

“Nigel…”

“So what if your parents fell in love? They made you, Star, and a more amazing accomplishment I’ve never seen.”

Adam frowned. “I’m not amazing.”

“Yes, you are, you…” he sighed, “Can I tell you a story, Adam?”

“Yes, but we’ll be late.”

Nigel smiled. “Yes or no?”

“I want to hear the story, yes.”

“My parents were both werewolves, and they were shit parents. My dad left when I was a baby, and my mom…she didn’t live long enough to matter.”

Adam frowned. “Nigel…”

“How old do you think I am, Darling?”

He shook his head. “I don’t know.”

“I’m eighty five,” Nigel said, “Eighty five years old, and all I’ve done the last few decades was fuck around and find out that most people - even monsters - aren’t worth much at all.”

Adam’s hands were warm as he leaned in closer, and Nigel felt his breath on his mouth.

“You don’t look eighty five,” he said, “But I know werewolves live a long time.”

“Yes, we do,” Nigel said, “We…we live as long as we need to in order to find a purpose.”

Adam frowned. “A purpose?”

Nigel shook his head. “That’s not my story,” he said, squeezing Adam’s hands, “I was born in Bucharest, which is in Romania.”

“Are there a lot of werewolves there?”

“Plenty,” Nigel said, “But it was my shit luck that I didn’t fall for one of them.”

He heard Adam’s heartbeat jump a little faster. “You fell for a vampire?”

“No,” he sighed, “A witch.”

Adam froze. “A witch?”

“Yes, Darling.”

“What…what happened to them?”

“Her,” Nigel sighed, “It was a her.”

Adam’s heart slowed, and Nigel saw tears fill his eyes. “Did she die?”

“I wish,” he sighed, “She…she didn’t want me, Darling, and I…I didn’t listen to my wolf. She strung me along for years, and then I found her with a human.”

“Oh, that’s…I’m sorry.”

“I attacked him,” Nigel growled, “I…I almost killed him.”

“Nigel…”

“They wanted to put me away, but I…I ran.”

Adam’s hands were so hot Nigel knew they would burn someone else, but not him. He didn’t let go, not even a little. “You could be put into captivity for that.”

“Yes, Darling.”

“They could still find you.”

Nigel smiled. “I know, Adam.”

“Why did you open up the bar? It’s not very inconspicuous, and any minute…”

Nigel sighed. “I’m not the same wolf I was then,” he said, “And nobody there cares enough to look for me now.”

Adam shook his head. “But they could.”

“Adam, that’s not the reason I told you the story.”

He frowned. “What was it?”

“I hated witches,” he said, “For the last…nearly ten years. I wouldn’t let a witch anywhere near me, and the very idea…made my skin crawl.”

Adam's heartbeat got faster, and he moved to drop Nigel's hands. "Oh, then that's…"

Nigel squeezed. "That was, until I met you."

Adam's eyes widened. "Oh."

"You think you're undeserving of your life because your magic isn't stable," he said, "But… you made me believe in magic again, Star. You made me forget."

Adam smiled, and took one of his hands back to turn palm up. A light came from his palm, and Nigel's wolf wagged its tail to see the moon he created.

"I'm glad."

He smiled. "Good. Now…"

Adam took Nigel's hand and moved the moon over the top of it, and the magic hovered just above his palm. "You made me forget too," he said, "About the things that…upset me."

"Adam…"

Adam smiled. "I think it's time to go shopping now."

Nigel nodded, standing, and held out his hand. Adam grabbed his hand gladly, and they left the apartment together. He knew he'd held back a lot from his story, things Adam didn't need to know, and try as he might Nigel wasn't sure he'd ever tell him.

Adam didn't need the burden of Nigel's troubles, and it wasn't like the WPA would come after him now. And if they did…Nigel knew he'd do anything he could to protect Adam from fallout.

Even if it meant never seeing him again.

Chapter 7

Adam's itinerary is fully planned for them throughout the day, just like Nigel asked, and yet Adam still felt restless throughout.

The first store, Home Things, is crowded when they arrive. Adam wished they would have left sooner, but he doesn't say that to Nigel as he makes his way toward the bedding.

"I don't know what kind of sheets you like," he said, "Some people like high thread counts, but I usually just like if something is soft and the color is nice."

"How do you know how soft they are?" Nigel asked, pushing the cart as Adam picked up a blue set.

"I have brands I like, and I just keep buying those."

"Do you see any of them here?"

Adam frowned, and looked at the wall of sheets. "No, it's called Luxury Soft. I have my set from back home, and a few others."

"Hmm."

He picked up another set and turned to see Nigel opening a set. "Nigel, you're not…"

Nigel held the sheets out to Adam, who frowned. "Soft enough?"

Adam brushed the sheets with his fingers. "No, I…you're not supposed to open the packages."

Nigel closed the package up and put the packs back. “How else would I know?”

“It’s…just not what you’re supposed to do, and…it shouldn’t matter if I don’t think it’s soft enough. I’m not going to…” Adam trailed off, frowning, and found another brand.

“You’re not going to what, Star?”

He looked at Nigel, his hands warm, and frowned. “I’m not going to sleep on these sheets, you are.”

Nigel took the package from him, opened the top, and held it out. “I thought you liked it when I slept beside you?”

“I…I *do* ,” he mumbled, touching the sheets, “But…”

“Soft enough?”

“Yes, it’s very soft.”

Nigel proceeded to take eight different colors of that brand off the wall in Queen and toss them into their cart. “Okay, let’s move onto lamps.”

“Ok.”

Adam was confused about his own reaction to not sleeping in Nigel’s bed as they walked through the lamp section. He knew they got along very well, and Nigel’s wolf liked him very much. But there were other times when Nigel might want to bring over a sexual partner or maybe even a significant other.

Would he be ok with that?

He felt himself shaking as he watched Nigel poke at a lamp display, and took several deep breaths.

He had to be ok with that.

It wasn't his place to tell Nigel what to do.

Adam looked at Nigel again and froze.

A blonde woman was talking to him, pressing herself against him, and Adam's hands got very hot as he watched them. Nigel didn't move to touch her, but she touched his shoulder, leaning in, and before Adam could even think suddenly the lamp Nigel was holding shattered across the store.

The woman screamed. "Oh my god!"

Adam took off running, already in tears, and ignored Nigel's voice yelling out behind him as he found the restroom. He went into the first stall and sat down covering his face with his hands.

He took deep breaths, trying to calm down, but tears stinged the corners of his eyes as he remembered that woman.

"Star? Darling, open the door."

Adam took several deep breaths, and didn't move.

"The store manager came over to apologize for the lamp," Nigel said, "I got a coupon."

He felt tears fall down his cheeks.

“Adam, please open the door.”

“I’m sorry.”

“What for?”

“For…”

Nigel got down on the floor, and crawled under the stall as Adam watched in shock. He knelt down at Adam’s feet, taking his hands, and sighed. “You wouldn’t open the door.”

“Nigel, I…I could’ve hurt you.”

“But you didn’t.”

“No, but—”

He frowned. “Why did the lamp explode, Darling?”

Adam chewed at his lip as the calm of Nigel’s touch fell over him. “I…I don’t know.”

“Don’t you?”

“I didn’t like that woman talking to you.”

Nigel smiled. “Why?”

“I…I don’t know.”

He got up, still holding Adam’s hands, and stared down at him. “Well, since you don’t know…I suppose I just won’t talk to anyone ever again.”

Adam frowned. “You can’t do that, you talk to people all the time for your job.”

“But you’re not there to see them,” Nigel said, “And whatever this feeling you have? That your magic has? It’s obviously important or you wouldn’t have it. Yeah?”

“Yes.”

“So, I’ll try to keep away from people for a bit as it settles down.”

“What if it doesn’t?”

“Then, it doesn’t.”

Adam stared up at him.

It wasn’t fair to make Nigel stay away from people because of him, but right now he felt much better knowing he would. “Ok.”

Nigel helped him up, and they left the stall together ignoring looks as they left the bathroom. The cart was still there waiting where they’d left it, and Adam stayed close as they went up to the register where Nigel paid for his sheets.

He was quiet as they got to the car, not sure what to say, and buckled up as Nigel did the same.

“Where next?”

“I…maybe I should go home.”

Nigel frowned. “But…you’re the only one who knows the schedule.”

“You don’t need me,” Adam said, looking away, “You can just find some stores to go to on your own.”

“Adam, c’mon. We were going to make a day of it, weren’t we?”

He shook his head. “I…”

Nigel took his hand and Adam turned to look at him.

“I’ll keep close,” he said, “And we’ll only go to a few more spots till dinner. Okay?”

Adam stared at their joined hands, and he frowned. “Ok.”

“Excellent,” Nigel said, “Now, where to?”

They ended up going to four more stores, though Nigel hated three of them the minute they walked inside. Both were higher end, and the lamps alone made Adam freeze.

“Not this one,” he said to both, turning to walk them out.

Adam hated that he was the reason, and as darkness fell he wondered if maybe he should’ve stayed home after all. They stopped to eat some dinner in the car, which was not on Adam’s schedule for them but after Nigel’s stomach growled many times he knew he was hungry.

“Star, we don’t have to stop anywhere. I can wait, it’s perfectly…”

“Take us there,” he said, shaking his head, “You need food, and I like their food.”

Burger Heaven was one of the only fast food restaurants Adam enjoyed, mostly because they had macaroni and cheese and good french fries. He got both, and Nigel bought himself four hamburgers.

He watched him eat with interest, noticing the way his eyes turned yellow, and blushed as he growled.

“Wolves really like meat.”

Nigel licked his lips after and smiled. “Oh Darling, you have no idea.”

They shared Adam’s fries, which made him feel very warm but in a good way, before heading to the final store.

This and That.

Adam was happy to see it was smaller, and there weren’t many cars in the parking lot.

Nigel froze as they got halfway to the door, his nostrils flaring, and before Adam could blink he ran into the store alone. Adam chased after him, confused, and stood in the open doorway but didn’t see him anywhere.

He took several deep breaths and let them out fast before deciding to let his magic guide him.

It didn’t take long at all after that.

Adam smiled as he heard Nigel's voice up ahead, talking about lamps with someone who obviously worked there, and when he got around the corner he froze.

There were two men - one blonde haired and one brown - who Nigel had his arms on as he talked to them.

"...and this one, while it's not really well known is…"

Nigel turned fast, rushing to Adam, and smiled. "Adam! You've got to come meet my friends."

Adam frowned as Nigel took his wrist, and brought him closer to the strangers.

"This is Hannibal," he said, "And Will."

The two men smiled at him. "Hello," Hannibal said, holding out his hand, "It's nice to meet you."

Adam took his hand, confused, and the coldness of his touch made him pause.

"You're a vampire."

Hannibal smiled, and his fangs showed openly. "Yes, I am."

Adam frowned. "How do you know Nigel?"

"Nigel and I, we…"

Will took Adam's hand from Hannibal, and the warmth there gave Adam pause though he still felt uneasy. "They met at Nigel's bar," he said, smiling, "Hi Adam. Nigel's told us a lot about you."

Adam felt his chest ache as he took his hand back. "He didn't tell me anything about you."

"There's been so much going on, Star," Nigel said, rubbing the back of his neck, "I just…I didn't really think of it."

"Oh."

Nigel and Hannibal looked at each other oddly for a minute, and Adam felt even worse. He knew something was being kept from him, and he didn't like it, but really it wasn't his business.

Right?

"We'll leave you be," Will said, smiling, "Hannibal only dragged me here because we need new sheets."

Hannibal smiled, and kissed his cheek. "It isn't my fault the sheets ripped, now is it?"

Will laughed. "It's both our faults."

Adam shook his head. "You…you don't have to go," he said, "Nigel was happy you were here so I'm sure he'd like your opinions on the things he needs to get."

Nigel frowned at him. "Adam, we don't…"

Hannibal put a hand on Nigel's shoulder. "Let me show you this one, Nigel. We'll just be a moment."

Adam nodded, and stood back.

He knew Hannibal wasn't going to take Nigel away, so he felt calmer as he watched them, but still it was hard.

"Why is Nigel out getting new lamps? Did he break what he already has?" Will asked, picking up a random lamp.

"He…there was a fire."

Will looked up fast. "At his apartment?"

"Yes," Adam said, his voice shaking, "It…was an accident. The firemen broke down my door in the night, because it was spreading around the building."

"Wow, didn't expect that. You live in Nigel's building? Isn't it all supernatural creatures there?"

Adam nodded. "Yes."

Will eyed him with interest. "You're not human."

"Not completely," Adam mumbled, "I…my mother was a witch, and my father…"

"NO!" Adam heard Nigel say, making his heart beat wildly in his chest.

He pushed past Will, not caring, and ran toward Hannibal and Nigel. His hands felt hot, too hot, and as he got closer Nigel turned blocking his path.

"Star, NO!" he said, grabbing Adam's wrists.

"What did he say to you?" Adam said, gritting his teeth, "You yelled so loud!"

Adam was knocked over suddenly away from Nigel, and to his surprise Will's eyes were glowing as he stood in front of Hannibal. "Calm the *fuck* down, witch," he hissed, "Or I'll calm you down myself."

Nigel growled. "Will…"

Hannibal sighed, and put his arms around Will as several people started to gather around them.

"Calm down, Beloved," he whispered, kissing Will's neck, "Calm yourself."

"But…"

"It's under control," he said, "Breathe for me, Will."

Adam stared at them, confused, and Nigel lifted him before he could say anything. "We're leaving," he said, "C'mon Star."

"But…"

He felt tears in his eyes as Nigel pulled him out of the store, and ignored the looks they got from strangers as they left.

Adam waited until he got into the car to squeeze his fists together, and the flames that came out scared him so badly he couldn't hold back the tears.

"Adam…"

"Don't touch me," he whispered, his voice shaking, "I could hurt you, I…I could've hurt your friends. I…"

Nigel tried to touch him, and Adam pushed him back with his magic. "DON'T TOUCH ME!"

He saw Nigel recoil, eyes wide, and he stared at Adam sadly. "Darling, I just…"

"We need to go back," he said, "I need to be home, I…I can't…"

"Alright."

Adam curled up on his side as tears fell down his face the whole ride home. He didn't say a word, shaking as his magic seemed ready to explode, and when they parked he jumped out of the car and ran.

Nigel didn't stop him, and he went right to his bedroom slamming the door behind him. He let loose his magic, falling to his knees as he heard several things break, and covered his face as he cried.

What was wrong with him?

Adam fell onto his side, shaking, and covered his mouth to keep the noise from reaching Nigel. Which didn't seem to matter when he heard Nigel's familiar growl, and whimpered as he came fully shifted into his room.

“No, no, no Nigel please…”

He came over to Adam, licking the tears off his face, and Adam felt so much calmer as he came in closer.

“I’m sorry,” he whimpered, “I…I’m so sorry.”

Nigel licked his cheek again, and Adam breathed in deeply as he faded fast. He woke in his own bed, the room still dark, and Nigel unshifted beside him in his bed. Nigel was naked, and Adam found himself pressing against him closer.

“Nigel?”

He sighed as he woke.”Star? You ok?”

“Yes.”

“I’m naked again.”

“Yes.”

Neither one of them moved, and Adam was glad.

“I’m sorry, Nigel.”

“I know, Adam.”

“I…I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

“There’s nothing wrong with you.”

He closed his eyes as he felt Nigel run fingers through his hair. “Yes, there is, and I don’t…”

Nigel sighed. “Darling, I think we need to have a talk.”

“What?”

“Your magic, and my…wolf…it’s…I think they’re connected.”

“I know they’re connected, Nigel. I don’t think, I know. I just…”

“Witches, Darling, what do you know about them?”

“I’ve read a lot of books and watched a lot of things online.”

“That’s all?”

“Yes, I…I don’t like talking to strangers.”

“Do witches have magical…connections…to animals?”

Adam frowned. “Like a familiar?”

“Yes.”

“Wait, do…do you think you’re my familiar?”

He felt Nigel tense.

“It’s not out of the question.”

Adam sat up in the dark, and turned on the lamp with his magic. “Nigel, you’re not… *no* .”

Nigel sighed. “Star…”

He shook his head. “No, that’s…no, you’re not. Familiars are…”

“They make magic easier,” Nigel finished, taking Adam’s hand, “And they stop overflows. I’ve done that for you more than once now, Adam.”

“But…no. No, Nigel.”

He sighed. “Adam…”

"You’re not my familiar, Nigel.”

“Then what am I?”

Adam shook his head. “I don’t know, but it’s not that.”

“Why? Why is it not that?”

Adam stared at him.

Because witches aren't attracted to their familiars.

"I don't know," he lied, "But it's not."

Nigel sighed. "Maybe you need to find someone who does."

Adam stared down at his hands as they shook, and clasped them together.

"If you don't want to sleep here, that's fine. I…I'm feeling better now."

The silence that followed made Adam tear up, and he felt the bed move. But then a large clawed paw pulled him down onto the bed. He sighed, and buried his face against Nigel's fur again.

"Goodnight, Nigel."

Nigel licked his cheek, and Adam smiled as he started to fall asleep again.

Tomorrow he'd start to look for what he came for all along.

His mother's family.

Maybe they'd know what was wrong, and be able to help him. If they didn't, he had no idea what he would do.

Chapter 8

Nigel woke up alone the next morning, much to his upset, and rolled out of Adam's bed to find the apartment empty. There was a note sitting by a coffee mug that he read several times before he understood it.

I'm going to find my family.

His wolf didn't like the idea of Adam going off alone, not at all, but it wasn't his place to tell Adam to do anything. He was only Adam's friend, and nothing else.

Wasn't that just fucking depressing?

He went to get dressed before he found some toast that he barely ate, still reeling from last night, and picked up his cell to find seven missed calls.

All from the same person.

Nigel sighed and called back, falling onto Adam's couch and closing his eyes as he breathed in the scent of the back cushions.

"You fucking asshole."

He smiled and rolled onto his back as he stared up at the ceiling. "Good morning, Shovel Man."

"Last night…what the fuck was that? You keep that *witch* away from Hannibal."

Nigel growled. “Oh come off it, Will. You know it was just a mistake.”

“He could’ve killed him!”

“He heard me yell! What was he supposed to do?”

“I don’t know? Not attack someone openly he barely knew? I know you told Hannibal all about how you’re convinced he’s your mate, but Nigel…he would’ve killed Hannibal.”

Nigel’s hands shook as he reached for the pack of cigarettes that were still sitting in his empty bedroom. “You don’t know that, Will.”

“No? I could barely sleep last night, worried out of my mind he was gonna come get him.”

Nigel scoffed. “It was a mistake, and it won’t happen again.”

“You’re right,” Will sighed, “It won’t. I…I don’t know what you’ve gotten yourself into Nigel, and you really did help us when we needed you but…I can’t have Hannibal in danger. I just can’t.”

He sighed. “So you’re just cutting me off?”

“For now. I mean, when you and Adam become mates…”

“He’s not…I can’t smell it on him, Will. I can’t…he’s never smelled any different the entire time I’ve known him. It’s like this blank slate, but god he smells so fucking perfect I…”

Will paused.

“You say he’s always smelled the same?”

“Exactly the fucking same.”

“So…maybe he’s always been attracted to you?”

Nigel blinked.

“I…”

“I gotta go, Nigel,” he sighed, “I…I’m sorry about yesterday, but for now…we’ll have to help long distance.”

He nodded. “It’s…just fine, Shovel Man.”

“Hannibal is worried about you, you know. He says he told you to get out of there, that’s what made you so mad. That the longer you deny yourself the worse it could get.”

Nigel stood, shaking, and felt a desperate urge to shift.

“Tell Fangs I’m just fine, and…if I just get to be near Adam that’s all I need.”

“Nigel…”

He ended the call, ignoring when he heard the sound of a text, and went right to Adam’s room. The scent of him was calming, more than it ever should be, and for now he could indulge without any worries. Nigel shifted, burying his nose into Adam’s pillow, and even rolling around through the sheets and comforter.

This was heaven.

Pure heaven.

Nigel got lost in his indulgence, getting worked up more than he needed, and was about to shift back to jerk off when a sudden pain in his chest made him howl. He shifted, clutching his chest, and could hardly breathe before he calmed.

His first thought was that he'd had a fucking heart attack.

The next was even worse.

Adam.

Something was wrong with Adam.

Nigel got dressed again, barely locking the door behind him as he left the apartment, and ran down the stairs out the door. His bike was parked where he'd left it, and he hopped on snarling as he took off where his wolf directed.

He didn't know what was wrong, but he knew Adam needed him.

His wolf pulled him all over, darting in and out of traffic for what felt like forever, until he came upon a quaint little house in a very old neighborhood. Adam's car was out front, and Nigel drove up onto the grass half shifted hopping the fence.

"ADAM! ADAM WHERE ARE YOU?"

The back door opened and Adam came out with wide eyes.

“Well,” an older woman said, as Adam ran over to Nigel looking upset, “Looks like I was right.”

“Nigel,” Adam said, touching his face, “I’m….ok. Calm down.”

“You’re upset.”

“I’m just fine.”

“No, you’re fucking not,” he growled, as Adam held him back, “What did she say to you? And who the hell is she?”

“This is my mother’s sister, Eve,” Adam said, “And…”

The door opened again, and Nigel froze as the witch from the bar came out looking smug.

“The witch.”

“Adam,” the witch said, “Or I suppose *Other* Adam, if we’re trying not to confuse you.”

“Oh poppet, please stop making a fool of yourself.”

“Mum, I was just…”

Eve, who looked to be in her sixties, came down the steps toward them. He stood in front of Adam, no longer shifted but still not calm.

"Calm down, Wolf," she said, "I'm not gonna harm him."

"You upset him, I…I could feel it."

"A strong connection the two of you have, which…is kind of strange. You haven't even connected yet magically, like you're supposed to."

Nigel froze.

"Nigel…"

"What do you fucking mean, 'like we're supposed to'?"

"I knew from the minute he walked up to me that poor Adam here had found a familiar. Which is amazing, let me tell you. Not many witches have familiars, and…"

Nigel heard nothing after she spoke, and felt Adam tense up against him.

Of course.

Just as he'd thought.

Maybe the whole reason he felt like this in the first place was because he was Adam's magical pet.

Nigel's chest hurt as he touched Adam's hand. "What do we have to do?"

Eve paused. "What?"

"To calm down his magic, to…connect us or whatever the fuck?"

"Nigel, no, I don't…"

"Adam doesn't want you to be his familiar," Eve said, shaking her head, "Which makes no sense to me but he got very upset when I told him you were."

"Mum, you really don't know what you're talking about. They…"

"Hush," she said to Other Adam, "You listen to your Mother, Poppet."

Adam sniffled. "It's a mistake," he whispered, "It…it's got to be."

Nigel forced himself to smile, and took Adam's hand leading him away from the two strangers.

"Star…"

"Nigel, no. I…I don't want to connect with you. I don't."

The sting he felt at Adam's rejection was harder than it should be. He wasn't even good enough to be someone's pet. The pain when he'd found out about Gabi and Charlie hadn't been half this.

“What’s wrong with me, huh? Not wolfy enough for you, Star?”

Adam had tears in his eyes. “No, it’s not that I…”

Nigel backed up, feeling so close to shift he could hardly keep himself together. “Don’t worry about it, Star,” he said, laughing it off, “I’ll pack up, and just…”

“NO!” Adam yelled, running to grab his arm.

A sudden heat made Nigel pause, and Adam tried to pull back but it was too late. He felt an instant connection, and they both flew apart at the same time.

“Oh my goodness, would you look at that. It’s a good thing, really, he was just being stubborn.”

“Mum, shut it.”

Nigel shifted when he saw them head for Adam, and ran over to stand between them.

The two witches sighed.

“We’re not gonna hurt him, Nigel,” Other Adam said, “We just want to help, yes?”

He didn’t move, and felt Adam stir grabbing his paw.

“No, no, no….”

Nigel turned to see Adam in tears, and whined coming up as Adam pushed him away. “Don’t!”

He laid down in front of him, not moving, and felt Adam touch his back with shaky hands.

“You’ve connected.”

“I didn’t want to,” Adam said, “Why did…”

“You were worried he was gonna go, so your magic made him stay.”

Nigel leaned into Adam’s touch, and sighed.

This was fine.

He could do this.

It felt better, the connection, though there was this ache that he couldn’t stop feeling that seemed unfilled.

“How do you feel, Adam?”

Adam sniffled. “Better.”

“See? I told you, all you needed was your familiar connection and you’d…”

“Mum, I think—”

“...and then you can keep him around for when you need him.”

“But I don’t want him to be my familiar,” Adam repeated, making Nigel whine.

“Adam, I think—”

“Well that’s just too bloody bad, isn’t it? You can’t dump a familiar once you’ve connected to them, it’s cruel. He’s yours now, Adam. Treat him well.”

Nigel relaxed.

He’s yours now, Adam.

That felt good to hear.

“Nigel?”

He looked up, still shifted, and saw Adam’s tear filled eyes looking back at him.

“I think you need to shift back now, though you don’t have any clothes.”

“I can find him some clothes,” Other Adam said, “If you’d both come inside?”

Adam stood up and nearly would’ve fallen if Nigel hadn’t caught him. He grabbed Nigel’s back, and together they walked inside. The cottage smelled like plants and fire.

Nigel hated it.

“Back here.”

They followed Other Adam to a room at the end of the hall, and Adam sat on the bed while Nigel waited.

“I really am sorry, Adam.”

Adam sighed, petting Nigel. “Familiars, do they…they have…they…”

Other Adam grabbed a shirt that looked too small and pants that seemed smaller.

“Do they what, love?” Other Adam asked, handing him the clothes.

Adam looked at Nigel, and then back at Other Adam. “Let’s talk in the hallway while Nigel dresses.”

“Alright.”

He resisted the urge to whine but sighed instead before shifting back.

The sounds of the two of them talking were oddly muffled, but he caught a few words.

“...married….sex….bond…”

He growled as he got the pants on just enough but struggled with the shirt.

“Fuck it.”

Nigel walked out to find Adam in tears again.

“What the fuck did you say to him now?”

Other Adam had his arm around him. “I answered a question he asked, Nigel,” he spat, eyes suddenly glowing yellow, “You stupid stubborn wolf.”

Nigel growled, coming forward, but Adam pulled him back.

“Nigel, stop.”

“He’s an asshole and I don’t like him.”

“He’s…helping me, and…he’s my cousin. He’s also…Tower of Babel.”

Nigel blinked. “Your video person?”

“Yes.”

He stilled.

Adam needed his videos.

He wouldn’t hurt Other Adam — for now.

Other Adam sighed. “I’ll come by later, Adam. Alright? We can figure this out.”

“Did you know?” Adam asked, frowning, “About me? About us?”

He shook his head and smiled. “A happy accident, really. I should’ve realized, shouldn’t I? We have a very similar taste in men.”

Nigel growled. “What the fuck does that mean? Adam doesn’t…”

Other Adam walked off, ignoring him, and he felt Adam tense up against him.

“We need to go back to the apartment,” he whispered, “The bed is coming.”

Nigel frowned. “Oh.”

“I’ll leave first, and then you.”

He nodded, but didn’t move.

“We have to go now.”

Nigel reached out and took Adam’s hand, feeling warmth instantly.

“How is your magic, Star?”

Adam's eyes filled with tears again.

"Better."

"That's good, yeah?"

Adam nodded. "Yes, I…I think so," he said softly, letting Nigel's hand go, "I'm going to go now. I'll see you there."

Nigel watched him walk down the hall, still confused, and followed close behind. The old witch Eve was still outside, sweeping the porch, and when he passed her by she touched his shoulder making him growl.

"You really are a mean one," she laughed, "That poor sweet thing is stuck with you now I suppose."

He winced.

"I…"

A broom flew across the yard, and Nigel turned to see Adam standing in the driveway. He didn't say a word, but Nigel felt an odd sense of satisfaction as he glared at Eve.

"There I go," he growled, "Making him mean already."

Eve didn't say a word, and Nigel came out to his bike passing by Adam who touched his shoulder. He shivered at the touch even through clothes.

This familiar thing felt good, even if it wasn't what he wanted.

He was Adam's, and knew it.

His wolf wanted to howl in celebration.

"Ready, Star?"

"She was very mean to you."

"I'm fine, Darling."

Adam frowned. "It's not nice, what she said."

"I've heard worse. You ready?"

He nodded, and Nigel got on his bike looking back once to see Other Adam standing in the yard. The witch had always spooked him, knowing a bit too much, and yet he hadn't known this.

It was almost funny that Adam seemed to be able to surprise everyone without even trying.

Adam pulled out of the driveway and Nigel followed close behind, calmer than he'd been in days.

Maybe this was what it had been all along.

He ignored the ache in his chest, and drove faster hoping to get home soon to be close to Adam again.

Mine.

Nigel bit back a howl.

Today wasn't anything like he'd expected, but still it was better than nothing.

All he needed was to be close to Adam.

Nothing else mattered.

Chapter 9

Adam couldn't sleep.

He lay on his bed, staring up at the ceiling, and reached out for comforting fur that wasn't there.

He sighed, rolling onto his side, and stared out at the window. Nigel was asleep in the next room, no doubt upset with him again since Adam hadn't asked him to sleep in his bed. The awkwardness after they'd gotten back had only gotten worse despite their new connection, and the arrival of the second bed.

Adam's magic was calmer now, but still stronger than he knew it should be, and it only made him wish he had someone to talk to about all this. His cousin was like him, yes, but not really, and the hurt from what he'd told him earlier still stung.

Familiars and witches didn't fall in love.

It just wasn't done, as familiars were mostly tools.

He didn't want Nigel to be a tool to fuel his magic. The pain of knowing that was all he was seemed like a hole that just kept getting bigger inside him all night long.

Adam rolled onto his back and tears filled his eyes.

What was he going to do?

He lifted his hand up, lighting the room, and put his feet on the ground just as a whine came outside his door. Adam froze, hating how much he wanted to let Nigel inside, and didn't move.

The whines got louder, scratching at his door making him feel worse, and before he could get up Nigel's voice came through the door.

"I know you're up, Star. You used your magic, and I could feel it. Let me in, Adam."

Adam didn't move, biting his lip.

He wanted to let Nigel inside, very very much, but it would be best if they didn't get too close. His instant attraction to Nigel was strange, and obviously wrong. He had to get over it before they could connect again.

"Go to bed, Nigel."

"No."

Adam balled his fists up at his sides. "LEAVE ME ALONE!"

He expected his magic to explode, break things, but it didn't.

Instead he heard the door unlock and Nigel stepped inside.

Nigel smiled in the doorway. "Your magic wants me in here with you, Star, even if you don't."

Adam glared at him, looking away, and tears fell down his face as he stared at his feet.

"Please go away."

Nigel came over, ignoring him, and sat on Adam's bed.

"You're upset with me, Adam, and I don't think I've done a single fucking thing wrong. Have I?"

He frowned. "No."

"Then what is it?"

Adam looked at their hands, so close on the bed, and his fingers itched to touch.

"I didn't want you to be my familiar."

"I know, and I'm not sure why."

He sighed. "Witches and familiars, it's not…they're not much more than friends."

"I thought we were friends, Darling."

Adam looked up at him. "I don't want to be friends with you, Nigel."

The visible reaction he got for his words came through their bond, and it hurt Adam as much as he knew it hurt Nigel. Nigel got up off the bed, scoffed, and reached for a pack of cigarettes in his pocket that weren't there.

"I see, well…it seems you're stuck with me then. I'll go back to my room and…"

“No!” Adam yelled, pulling him back onto the bed.

Nigel blinked. “Adam?”

He reached out, touching his face. “I’m sexually attracted to you, Nigel, I…I have feelings I can’t really explain and I just want to be closer. It’s not normal for a witch and familiar to be that way, not at all, and I don’t—”

Nigel kissed him then, so softly Adam whimpered, and when he pulled back his expression confused Adam. He looked sad.

“It’s my fault, Darling.”

“What?”

He touched Adam’s face and sighed. “My wolf has it in him that you’re my mate,” he said, sounding unsure, “And perhaps this feeling has brushed off onto you because of the familiar thing? I’m not sure how it works but…”

“No, no,” Adam said, suddenly feeling so much lighter than he had moments ago, “I think…”

“We can get it out of our systems,” Nigel whispered, his voice shaking, “And perhaps you’ll feel better?”

Adam blinked. “Our of our systems?”

“Sex, Star. We can have sex, and then perhaps this energy will be gone.”

Adam's body felt instantly warm and he got up on his knees moving closer to Nigel. "I'm not sure–"

"We don't have to, Adam, it's just…you're in pain Darling and it kills me to see you like this. Just absolutely…"

Adam pushed him down on the bed, smashing their mouths together, and Nigel visibly shuddered as he took him in his arms. He felt warmer, hotter, and before Adam could even think Nigel pushed him down, pulling a shirt over his head.

"Nigel…"

He looked dazed, flushed, and a sweet scent hit the air that made Adam's cock ache.

"Fuck," Nigel growled, "I…fuck I think I'm…going into heat."

Adam blinked. "Heat?"

"It's a wolf thing, Darling, and it's…it's dangerous I have to…"

He moved to stand, falling onto the floor, and Adam jumped down to help him.

"Nigel!"

Nigel looked up at him, his eyes yellow, and Adam touched his face.

"Nigel."

“Adam, I need…”

“What? What do you need?”

His fangs were almost as big as when he was shifted as he tried to speak.

“You,” he growled, “I need *you*.”

Adam leaned in and sniffed his neck. “Nigel, you smell so good.”

“Star…please.”

Adam lifted his head, his body so hot he was surprised it didn’t burn Nigel’s skin.

“Nigel, what…”

Nigel growled, turning on his belly as he teared at his clothes. He was naked from the waist down as he got on his knees, and Adam could smell sweetness coming off him in waves.

“You want me to…”

“Fuck me, fuck me, f…”

He was shaking as he took off his pajama pants and pulled down his boxers before lifting his shirt off over his head. Adam put both hands on Nigel’s ass and pressed the tip of his thumb inside.

“Nigel, you’re…*wet*.”

“Please, please, pl…”

Adam didn’t have to be asked again, positioning himself behind him, and thrust inside without warning. Nigel keened, arching his back, and Adam started to fuck him in earnest with his body pressed tightly to Nigel’s.

“So tight, so…wet…Nigel…it feels…”

Nigel turned to kiss him, biting Adam’s lip with a fang, and Adam kissed back just as messily unable to stop. He needed this, craved it, and when he felt Nigel seize up spilling across the carpet he nearly shouted.

Adam kept on, grunting as he dug his nails in, and when he came Nigel’s body arched back while his wet willing hole pulled Adam in. He didn’t stop, kissing Nigel’s back, and when they collapsed together, he held him tight.

“Nigel…”

Nigel growled, turning again to kiss him once more, and Adam had never felt so good in his entire life.

This was what they should’ve been doing since the beginning.

Nigel was his, all his.

He heard Nigel struggle to catch his breath, but not moving, holding Adam in close still as they lay.

“Nigel?”

“It’s going to get worse before it gets better.”

Adam frowned. “Do you want me to leave? I can leave, and…”

He looked back at Adam, touching his cheek. “Star, the last thing I want is for you to go.”

“But?”

“Adam, there’s so much you don’t know. There’s mates, and heats, and…our familiar shit is mucking it all up, I’m sure.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Adam, I’m not the mating type. I’m…wolves like me don’t get forever.”

“Nigel, I…”

Nigel groaned suddenly, hissing, and Adam could suddenly smell that familiar sweetness rising again. “It’s beginning again?”

“Yes,” he growled, “Star…”

“If you want me to go, I’ll go, but I don’t want to go. I want…Nigel I want to help you, I want to…”

Nigel turned, eyes yellow again, and face half shifted. “I can get…bred,” he mumbled, his voice coming out all garbled, “Wolf puppies are the l…”

Adam’s eyes widened. “Babies?”

“Adam, please just…”

He kissed Nigel’s neck, sniffing, and grabbed his hand now half clawed. “Tell me to go,” he whispered, “Tell me to…”

Nigel arched his backside, brushing Adam’s cock, and made a noise as close to a purr as he could get.

“S…tay,” he said, voice shaking, “Stay.”

Adam kissed down his neck before he gently thrust inside making Nigel howl.

“I’ll take good care of you, Nigel, I…I promise.”

He would take care of Nigel, as best as he could, and if this ended in wolf puppies…he’d take care of them too.

Nigel might not believe that this feeling was real, that they really were mates, but Adam would make him believe. Because the thought of not having this again after the heat was over would break his heart.

Chapter 10

Nigel had gone through plenty of heats in his lifetime.

Some alone, some even with Darko himself, and yet not ONE had felt like this.

Adam thrust into him like a man possessed, his pleased whimpers and moans only fueling Nigel's need the more it continued. He needed more, needed it all, and he knew Adam would give him everything.

No matter how many times it started again.

"More," Nigel growled, "Adam…please!"

Nigel could see how tired he was, hated that he never wanted this to end, and yet this connection between them made it impossible. Even now he knew if his heat didn't end in a pup he'd wear Adam out before it was over.

He came with a shout, spilling across the sheets, and Adam held him close thrusting twice more before he spilled again. He could feel Adam's breath on the back of his neck as he held him close, and the way he nuzzled Nigel was everything.

"Nigel, I'm…tired."

Nigel held his hands tightly. "I can go," he sighed, trying to move away, "I…I can…"

Adam hissed, holding him still with magic, and the possessiveness made Nigel's wolf so happy he could've howled.

“No! No, no, I…I can help. I want to help, you need my help.”

Nigel turned, kissing him again, and touched Adam’s cheek. “It might not stop till morning, Star, I’m…not as fit as I used to be, and I’m older it might just go until we both pass out from it.”

Adam frowned. “Ok.”

“Adam….”

“I don’t want you to do this alone.”

“I’ve done it alone before,” Nigel sighed, his eyes heavy, “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

They didn’t move, and Adam’s cock was soft now but Nigel didn’t want him to pull away. He would let him, if he needed to, but the thought made him bite back a whine.

“She…”

“Gabi didn’t have a cock, Darling, and she wasn’t too keen on being forced to service me.”

“You’re not forcing me.”

Nigel smiled. “No, but whatever this is between us…it’s pulling you in whether you want to or not.”

“Nigel…”

He sighed. “I’m gonna rest my eyes, Star, and you’re gonna take this magic off so we can clean up a bit. Don’t want to wake up all messy, do you?”

Adam stopped his hold, and Nigel rolled away from him. He forced himself to leave, heading into the bathroom for a warm wet washcloth and looked in the mirror.

His face was flushed, suck marks on his neck making him smile even as the pain lingered.

This wasn’t going to last, he knew that, but for now it was all he had. Nigel came back to find Adam laying there, looking exhausted, and washed off their passionate leavings while Adam just smiled tiredly.

“You smell like me,” Nigel said, wiping him off, “So much.”

“I like smelling like you.”

He smiled. “Oh?”

“And I like you smelling like me.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know why, I just…I just do.”

Nigel cleaned himself off, and climbed back into bed, desperate to feel Adam close again. Adam pulled him in, resting his chin on Nigel’s shoulder, and the heat felt like it was ending but he wasn’t sure.

“Do you think it’s over?”

He put Adam's hand on his belly. "I don't know. If it's not, we'll know soon."

"How many," Adam yawned, "Babies do wolves have at a time?"

"Can be from one to six, it varies. My mother only had me, much to her disappointment."

He frowned. "Nigel…"

"Go to sleep, Star. If I need you again, you'll know."

Nigel watched Adam fall asleep fast then and waited to press his face to Adam's neck breathing him in as deeply as he could. The scent of their sex was still so heavy in the air, even with him cleaning them off, and he wanted to drown in it. He started to get tired fast, the comfort of his mate making it almost impossible not to succumb to the exhaustion of the last few hours, and when he closed his eyes he fell into a dream.

It was a simple dream, so simple, and yet Nigel never wanted to leave.

Adam was holding a small shifted wolf on his lap, smiling, and Nigel laid his head on Adam's shoulder just watching his mate interact with their son.

And Adam was his mate, the bond so strong Nigel could feel nothing but love between them, and he kissed Adam's mating mark.

"I love you, Star," he whispered, "So fucking much."

Adam held his hand, the magic flowing between them just as strong as their mating bond, and he kissed Nigel's hand.

“I love you, Nigel.”

And then the door was kicked in.

Nigel growled as dozens of men ran into the apartment, yanking their pup from Adam who screamed trying to fight them off. He was held down, terror in his eyes as they dragged both his son and mate away while snickering in his ear.

“This is all your fault, beast.”

He woke when he heard Adam scream his name, growling as he rose on all fours fully shifted.

Adam put out his hand, petting Nigel’s side, and he turned to look at him.

“Nigel, what’s wrong?”

He shifted then, curling into Adam without a word, and Adam hugged him tightly.

“Tell me what’s wrong.”

“I had a nightmare, Star, that’s all.”

“About what?”

He bit back words he didn’t want to say.

“Nigel please.”

“They came for me,” he said, his voice shaking, “And they took…they took you and…the pup instead.”

Adam froze. “Pup?”

He lifted his head. “It didn’t start again, Adam, so that means there’s a pup or even more than one. I’m s…”

Adam kissed him then, cutting off Nigel’s words, and when he pulled back he was smiling. “A baby?”

“You’re not upset.”

“No, why would I be? I told you I didn’t care.”

Nigel frowned. “This…it’s not a…I’ll need you, Adam. All the time, nearby and…it’s…”

Adam frowned. “Nigel, I know.”

Nigel blinked back tears. “I can still help with the magic, I know that’s what I’m supposed to do, but it might be harder the further along I get. I can try, but…”

“No! I…I don’t need you to do that.”

“Adam, yes you do.”

Adam put both hands on his cheeks and he could feel him shaking. “I spent a very long time doing this on my own, I can manage. I’m very good at managing.”

Nigel smiled. “Yes, you are. Adam…”

“And I think I would make a very good mate.”

Nigel blinked. “What?”

“I know you said you think your wolf is wrong, that we’re not mates, but I don’t think the familiar bond would make me able to do what I’ve done the last few hours. I think…”

Nigel moved away from him. “Adam, no.”

The hurt he could feel from Adam felt like he’d been shot in the chest. “What?”

“You’re not going to just…I’m not going to make you take my bite because of this. It was a mistake, a cross contamination between the familiar bond and my fucked up biology. You shouldn’t have to suffer because…”

Adam had tears in his eyes as he looked at Nigel. “Suffer?”

Nigel stood up, looking away. “I need some air. I…I won’t go far.”

Adam didn’t tell him not to go, and he probably deserved that, though he could still feel Adam’s pain.

He wanted to help Nigel and the possible pup, obviously, but he had no idea what he'd be getting himself into. Wolves mated for life, the direct connection instant, and the thought of being tied to a resentful Adam felt worse than death.

Nigel went right to his room, getting dressed fast, and headed right for the mini mart down the street. He itched to get a new pack of cigarettes, but resisted knowing what it could do to the pup. He instead bought something sweet, eating fast, and walked around the block hoping by the time he got back the pain would lessen from Adam's end.

It didn't.

He got back around one, without any heat restarting, and knew he was pregnant.

What would Adam say?

Nigel unlocked the apartment, stepping inside, and frowned when he didn't see Adam waiting. He headed into the bedroom and found him curled up in bed still, and the pain was less only because he was probably sleeping.

He reached out, shaking Adam's shoulder from behind.

"Star? It's nearly one. Are you going to wake up?"

Adam didn't move.

"Star?"

Nigel walked around the bed and saw Adam's eyes were open and red from obvious crying. He dropped to his knees. "Adam, what is it?"

“What’s wrong with me?”

He blinked. “What?”

Adam’s tears got worse, flowing down his face, and Nigel could feel every bit of pain rise up again. “Why would I suffer as your mate? What makes me any different?”

“What? No, Darling that’s not what I—”

He shook his head. “You said I would suffer, and I don’t think I would. I think I would make a very good mate, and you would be a very good mate to me. I have feelings for you, Nigel, and I want to be with you forever. I know I do.”

Nigel whined, nuzzling Adam’s cheek. “Star, you can’t say that. You don’t know that.”

“What’s wrong with me?” Adam asked again, his voice shaking, “Why can’t I…”

“Because you’ll be stuck with me,” he whispered, “You’ll be stuck, and you can’t get out like she did. You can’t change your mind, not from that, and it might fuck up your magic or hurt you and I can’t…”

Adam pulled him closer. “I don’t care.”

“Adam…”

A loud knocking made them both freeze, and Adam sat up wiping his cheeks.

“Can you hear who it is?”

Nigel paused, listening, and shook his head. It was a dull buzz, like someone was trying to block him, and he was immediately on alert.

Adam got up, found some clothes, and Nigel growled shifting before grabbing his pants with his teeth as the knock came again more persistent. “Nigel, I have to answer the door.”

Nigel whined as Adam pushed him away gently, and walked to the door peering out.

The instant fear he felt when Adam looked out made him even more frightened.

Was this it?

Had they come for him?

“Who is it?” Adam asked, his voice shaking.

“Wolf Protection Agency, sir. We have some questions.”

Nigel bit back a growl.

He should’ve known.

“You can ask them through the door, I’m not dressed.”

“Sir, we need to speak with you urgently.”

Adam balled his hands up at his sides, and Nigel desperately wanted to be closer to him but didn't. He had to be ready to be apart, wean himself away from the happiness he felt just being near, and it had to start now.

"Why?" Adam asked, stepping in front of Nigel.

"It was reported that you've been familiar bonded to a fugitive from justice thought to be deceased. We have some questions."

Nigel whined, shifting back, and stared at the floor trying to catch his breath. If he didn't put an end to this soon Adam might be in danger.

"I don't want you to come inside," Adam said, his voice getting louder.

"Sir, if you won't open the door we'll open it for you."

Nigel stood up, completely naked, and let out the breath he'd been holding in.

"Adam."

Adam didn't turn around, and Nigel reached out to touch his back. "Open the door, Star."

"Nigel, no."

"Star, it will be fine," he lied, "Just…"

"I need my familiar," Adam said, coming closer to him as his voice shook, "I need him, and you can't take him away from me!"

The knocks got louder, and several things started to break in the kitchen as Adam panicked.

“Breathe, Adam,” Nigel purred, wrapping his arms around him, “Darling, it’ll be alright. You just…”

“What happens when you mate?” he asked, “Nigel, how do we mate? How…”

Nigel froze. “What? Star, you’re not…”

“WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO!?” Adam yelled, turning to him as the door started to break.

Tears filled Nigel’s eyes as he stared into Adam’s terrified ones. “I have to bite you, and you bite me. Star…”

Adam pulled him in close just as he heard the door break, and bit into Nigel’s neck hard. He howled, biting him back on instinct, the bond taking hold so instantly he was light headed.

“Shit.”

They both turned, blood on their mouths, and Adam held out both hands in front of him while one was around Nigel’s neck.

“Get out of my house,” he said, “Or I’ll kill you.”

The two wolves both froze.

“We can’t break a bonded pair,” one of them said, “Even a dangerous one, it’s against the code.”

Adam moved his hand and a frame fell on the floor breaking.

“Get out of my house. NOW!”

“He’s dangerous,” one of them said, “You have no idea who you’ve just bonded to.”

“Yes, I do,” he said, “GET OUT!”

Nigel could smell their fear as they backed out into the hallway, and when they were gone he caught Adam just as he collapsed exhausted against him.

“Fuck, fuck, FUCK!” Nigel growled, lifting him, “That was so reckless, Star, so…I know you thought you were helping but now you can’t…shit.”

He lifted him up into his arms, carrying him back to the bedroom, and Adam pulled him down onto the bed holding him tight. He whimpered, unable to resist the touch of his mate.

“Mine,” Adam sighed, “Nigel…”

Nigel’s wolf was so torn between happiness and pain at finally mating Adam. He knew Adam had only done it to protect him and the pup. This fucked up biological mess of familiar and mate was the worst thing that had ever happened to him.

“You’re mad at me.”

“No,” Nigel sighed, “I’m mad at me. Star, you just bonded us together for life, it’s not…it protected me, yes, but…now you can’t die till I do and vice versa. You put a huge target on your head, and…Adam…”

“But…”

“They would’ve let me stay until the pup was born,” Nigel said, “And then…”

“No,” Adam said, “No, no, no.”

Nigel leaned back against him. “Your aunt reported us, you know that yes?”

“Yes,” Adam said, “She shouldn’t have done that.”

“I didn’t know witches had familiar registries.”

“They do, and I wasn’t going to tell anyone because I didn’t want you to be my familiar.”

“Star…”

Adam turned Nigel onto his back and stared down at him. “Nigel, I know you’re upset with me but I was going to prove to you we’re supposed to be mates. This is just doing it backwards.”

Nigel felt his words like a knife in his chest.

This was a mistake.

He knew he'd fuck it up, make Adam hate him, and it would be so much worse than Gabi ever had been.

"Darko wanted me to kill you, you know."

"Why?"

"Because of this," Nigel sighed, "Because when I lost her it almost broke me but if I lost you now it would kill me."

"Nigel…"

Nigel kissed him then, softly, and Adam pulled off his shirt as Nigel felt his backside grow wet again. Adam rolled him over, thrusting into him again without a word, and bit into Nigel's neck as he started to move. Nigel groaned, fucking back, and Adam kept going not pulling his mouth away, and when Nigel's orgasm was ripped from him Adam put hands on his belly licking at the bite while Nigel growled tiredly.

"I want to love you," Adam said, "Let me love you."

He took Adam's hands, kissing them, and as the thrusts intensified Adam cried out when Nigel bit his arm. Tears filled Nigel's eyes as he felt him spill inside him, and he howled as Adam bit him again. Adam collapsed, exhausted against him, and Nigel closed his eyes.

"Ok," he whispered, "Ok."

Nigel felt Adam's smile against his neck, his eyes getting heavy, and Nigel licked the blood from his arm.

This might be the worst thing to ever happen to him.

Or the best.

He didn’t know.

But he’d do anything he could to keep Adam happy, and his family safe.

That’s all he cared about now.

Chapter 11

The first thing Adam did when he woke up was check the time, even as he felt Nigel's wolf form against his neck.

It was almost five, nearly dinner, but he didn't want to move.

He hugged Nigel close, nuzzling his fur, and Nigel licked his cheek even in his sleep. Their bond was strong, flowing between them so much he felt like they were the same person, and it was strange but he didn't dislike it.

Adam went to put his phone down just as it buzzed in his hand, and he didn't recognize the number but answered anyway.

"Hello?"

"Before you hang up, just let me explain."

He hung up the phone, setting it down on his bedside table, and pulled Nigel close just as he heard it ring again. Nigel lifted his head, shifting, and frowned at him.

"Who is it?"

"Adam," he said, "I don't want to talk to him."

"It might be important, Star."

"It doesn't matter."

"Adam…."

Adam put his arms around him, and held him there with magic. "We're resting, Nigel."

Nigel sighed. "Darling, you can't keep me like this forever and…what about your schedule?"

Adam frowned, suddenly anxious.

"It's fine."

"Adam."

He let him go and Nigel sat up, staring down at him. "They put you in danger."

"Yes, but we're safe now."

Adam balled his fists up at his sides. "They shouldn't have done it."

"Yes, but they did, and they're your only family. Do you want to push them away?"

He stood up, threw open his dresser drawer, and found some clothes while not answering Nigel. Worry came through their bond, stronger than anything, and he went right to the shower to think.

The water wasn't completely warm when he got inside, but he didn't care. Eve and Other Adam were family, yes, but Nigel was his mate. He knew which one was more important. Adam leaned against the wall, his hands warm as he tried to calm down. Everything felt like it happened so fast, and wasn't about to slow down.

He felt the shower curtain open, letting in cold, and Nigel came in behind him holding Adam tight.

"Are you upset with me, Star?"

"No."

"I can feel you, Darling, there's no need to lie."

Adam sighed. "I'm not suffering," he said, turning to look at him, "Don't think I am."

"Star, I wasn't thinking that."

"Yes, you were."

Nigel frowned. "I'm sorry I said that, Star. Really, it…I know I upset you. It wasn't about you, it was about me."

Adam felt Nigel's pain through their bond and grabbed his hand. "Why?"

"Adam, I'm…the things I did back home…"

"That doesn't make you a bad man, Nigel, you just—"

Nigel smiled. "How many good men do you know who nearly kill someone?"

Adam squeezed his hand. "One. You."

"Adam—"

He pressed Nigel down onto the bed, and stared into his eyes as they turned yellow.

"You were jealous," he said, nuzzling Nigel's cheek, "And that…it came out wrong."

"Most men don't try to kill someone they're jealous of, Star."

"No, but you're not just a man, and you…you wanted something she couldn't give you."

"What?"

"A bond," he said, "A…connection."

“Adam, you’re….fuck…”

He lifted his head. “But I can,” he said, “I *did*.”

Nigel put both hands on his cheeks. “Yes, you did.”

“And I want more, Nigel, I want…I want it *all*.”

Nigel growled. “The familiar bond, the mating it’s all…it’s messed us both.”

“I don’t care.”

He sighed as Nigel pulled him down into a kiss, climbing on top of him. Their bond seemed to burn through him, making Adam hot, but he didn’t pull away. He felt Nigel shudder, growling again, and just as he pulled back for him to turn the cell phone rang again.

Nigel paused, panting for breath. “Answer it.”

“What? No, we’re busy. Nigel, I don’t want to answer it.”

Nigel got up fast, grabbing his phone, and put it to his ear. “Hello? Yes. Yes. No,” he said, looking at Adam, “Oh fuck off. Yeah, we did. Don’t believe me, Witch? Come see for yourself.”

He set the phone down and sighed, cock still hard as he stood there, and Adam didn’t move.

“I didn’t want to answer the phone, Nigel.”

“I know, but despite all their bullshit we need them. Don’t we? You don’t know enough about witches yourself, Star.”

Adam’s frowned. “I know.”

“And try as I might I don’t know jack shit about mating bonds either. I know not a single wolf who’s bonded. That’s still alive, anyway.”

“Your friend, Darko?”

“Darko is *not* coming here, no way am I letting him near you.”

Adam got up, pulling Nigel close again, and sighed. “Ok.”

“The witch is coming here,” he mumbled, “So we better get dressed for company.”

Adam kissed him softly, and Nigel buried his face into Adam’s neck breathing in deeply.

“I’m going to make Eve apologize,” he said, frowning, “For putting you in danger.”

“Adam, you don’t have to do that.”

“Yes, I do.”

Nigel smiled. “Alright, but there is something else I think we need to do.”

“What?”

He took Adam’s hand and squeezed hard. “A bit of magic, Darling. Just a bit.”

He frowned. “What?”

“You’ve been using your magic to keep me in bed all day, Star, but I know you can do more. Show me what you can do.”

Adam stared at their hands. “What do you want me to do?”

Nigel kissed his cheek. “Dress me.”

Adam stared down at his nakedness. “What if I don’t want to?”

Nigel laughed. “Please?”

He stepped back, still holding Nigel’s hand, and closed his eyes, picturing some clothes for Nigel to wear: a black t-shirt, jeans, underwear, and socks. He felt their joint hands get warm, and felt Nigel shiver.

“Star, look.”

Adam opened his eyes and blinked.

Nigel was still naked, but Adam was wearing the clothes.

He blushed. “Oh. Sorry.”

Nigel smiled. “Your magic really does want me naked and ready, yes?”

Adam stepped in close to him. “I think so.”

“Hmm…”

“Nigel, don’t tease me.”

He let go of Adam’s hand, stepping back. “If you won’t dress me, Star, I need to dress myself.”

Adam watched him go reluctantly, and waited until he closed his bedroom door to leave. The broken door was still there when he went into the next room and other reminders of their near miss with the werewolves. He thought about fixing them but just stood, staring at the mess when he felt Nigel’s hands come around his waist.

“Fix it, Star.”

“I want him to see.”

Nigel kissed his cheek. “At least pick up the glass.”

He entwined their fingers, and they both looked at the things he broke began fixing themselves one by one. It felt so easy, like breathing, and Adam was smiling wide when they finally finished cleaning the floor.

“That…”

Clapping made them both turn to see Other Adam in the doorway.

“Bravo,” he said, “You’re…you make a good pair.”

Adam glared at him. “You shouldn’t have come here.”

He stepped inside, looking at the broken door, and frowned. “I was invited.”

“By my *mate,”* Adam said, his voice hard, “The mate you said I couldn’t have.”

“I never said that.”

“YES YOU DID!” Adam yelled, shaking as Nigel hugged him.

“Calm down, Star. Just breathe.”

He let out a breath as Other Adam sat on the couch turning to them both.

“I said familiars and witches didn’t fall in love or mate, but I never said they couldn’t. You and Nigel are, as far as I know, the first.”

Adam blinked.

“Oh.”

“And Mum is rather aghast at what she did, and is afraid you’ll kill her.”

Nigel kissed Adam’s cheek. “Star…”

“I want to,” Adam said, his voice shaking, “She put Nigel and our child in danger.”

Other Adam blinked. “Child?”

“Yes, we’re expecting, it…it just happened.”

He smiled. “A wolf witch,” he whispered, “I’ll be bloody damned.”

Adam glared. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, I just…you and your wolf are going to be visited by a coven soon if this continues. They’re always looking for more power.”

Nigel tensed. “More power? Coven?”

“Mum’s in a coven and regularly goes to meetings but I stopped a long time ago. The whole group filled with rules thing, isn’t my style. I doubt it’s yours either.”

"Are you saying they’ll want our child?”

“You mean take it?” Other Adam asked, laughing, “Oh no, no, no! They’ll want you to come in and join them! Magic isn’t taken, it’s acquired by choice. Just like you and Adam choose to mate and bond both ways.”

Adam stood in front of Nigel. “I don’t want them to come here.”

“And I’ll tell Mum that but I’m just warning you.”

Nigel sighed. “So we brought you here for answers but you just gave us more questions.”

Other Adam shrugged. “Sorry? I can tell you though, looking at the two of you now compared to earlier….your auras are so much healthier. I sensed such indecision and fear in you both but you’re much clearer.”

Adam didn’t move.

“And that’s good?”

“Very.”

“That’s good then,” Nigel said, pulling away from Adam, “Do you want some tea, Witch? Or are you just going to wax poetic for the rest of the night?”

Other Adam snapped his fingers and they both watched as a mug floated out of the cabinet and the stove turned on for water. “I can do it myself, thank you. But I will say, you’re lucky. The WPA is very strict on mating bonds.”

Nigel tensed. “Adam bonded us, and…I finished it.”

Other Adam blinked. “Oh, I assumed you would’ve started things. Did that happen today as well?”

“Just as they broke into the door,” Adam said, “I wasn’t going to let them take Nigel away.”

“I…” he looked at them both and smiled, “And you were both overthinking all of this for so long? It’s like something out of a bloody romance novel!”

Nigel scoffed, hugging Adam as he leaned on him. “The familiar bond, it…it’s been messing with us both. It’s…”

The tea water started to erupt and they watched as Adam got a teabag and then floated the finished tea across the room. He sipped it, and then asked.

“Can you hand me the sugar, cousin?”

Adam nodded, and without even thinking of it he made the sugar float to his cousin with ease.

Other Adam smiled. “You have it all wrong, you know? Bonds don’t ‘mess’ with other bonds. They only make them stronger. You were drawn to one another from the start, it’s… have you heard of true mates, Wolf?”

Nigel stepped back, scratching his neck. “I…I need to use the bathroom. I…I excuse me.”

Adam frowned as Nigel left them, and his cousin sighed.

“He’s obviously heard of it,” he said, “You’re very lucky, Cousin. Not all of these supernatural types are open to the mate thing. Some of them…they try to deny it, and it’s… more painful than you’d think.”

Adam looked at him. “What do you mean?”

Other Adam sighed, sipping his tea. “Nothing, cousin. Absolutely nothing.”

Chapter 12

Nigel stood staring in the mirror as he tried to calm down. He focused on Adam's heartbeating, steady as it was, and their bond that was filled with worry. A splash of water on his face didn't do much, but he left anyway hearing the two Adams talking.

"...and it's instant. You're theirs, and there's no one else."

He paused before he got into view.

"Why wouldn't Nigel tell me?"

"I don't know, Adam, but why don't you ask him?"

Nigel let out a long breath. *Shit.*

"Nigel, I know you're there. We're bonded now, remember?"

He stepped out, hand at his belly, and glared at the Other Adam. "He's still here."

"You invited him," Adam said, frowning, "And now I know that you didn't tell me everything. Nigel, are we true mates?"

Nigel resisted the urge to shift. "Adam…"

"Are we?" he asked, "Is that…is that why you were so upset? Why you kept coming to me, and why you kept…"

“Star, I’m not about to talk about this shit with *him* here. Alright? I don’t trust him, no matter who he is.”

Other Adam sighed. “I’m here because *you* bloody asked me, Wolf. I didn’t have to come.”

“I didn’t ask you to sit here, telling my mate shit you have *no right* to tell him. We’re mated now, it doesn’t mean…”

“It MEANS EVERYTHING!” Other Adam yelled, “Your bond…the mating bond…the familiar bond…the true *fucking* mate bond…the two of you could move mountains.”

They looked at each other.

“What do you mean?”

He smirked. “You’re asking me now? I thought you wanted me to leave?”

“Adam…” Adam said, “Please.”

Other Adam frowned. “The more magic you let flow between you the stronger you’ll be, and the stronger you’ll be the more you’ll have people noticing you. Magic is…endless…but not for everyone. The covens will come, and they’ll be desperate for you. They’ll protect you, but…you have to be safe with it. You know? You can’t just say yes to anyone.”

“But Eve…”

He shook his head. “Mum’s coven is weaker than most, and honestly the bloody bullshit she pulled will make it hard for either of you to trust them. I’d look elsewhere. Covens are supposed to be *family,* not the enemy.”

“Well then…I suppose we’d better prepare.”

Other Adam sighed. “It won’t just be the witches either,” he mumbled, “The wolves might want you as well.”

“I don’t want to be in a pack,” Nigel growled, “I don’t need someone in my business. Alright? We’re just fine alone.”

“Oh? Is that why Adam had to force the bond on you like he did? Because you were *just fine* ?”

“Listen here..”

He smirked. “You'd better figure out where you do want to be, Wolf. For Adam’s sake, and your little magic witch pup.”

Nigel felt Adam’s fear and came over fast, wrapping his arms around him on the couch.

“Nigel, maybe we…need to think about it.”

“Star, why are we believing him anyway? He might know about things like familiars and all that, but what does he know about true mates?”

Other Adam glared at him. “I know about true mates, Wolf. I know plenty about true mates.”

“Oh yeah? Why? You’re a witch, not a wolf or a vamp. I don’t see any bites on your neck, now do I?”

“Nigel…”

“Fuck off,” Other Adam said, his eyes narrowing, “You have no idea about my life, Wolf. No…”

“Then *tell us* and quit playing around! Why would you even know a thing about this? You said no familiar and mate bonding ever happened, so why do you even know that? Why?”

Other Adam blinked back tears. “I know, because this…”” he gestured back and forth between them with sudden tears in his eyes, “I *want* this to happen. I want my cousin to be happy because…because I *can't* .”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Nigel asked, “You don't…”

Other Adam got up, hands glowing, and shook his head. “I should not have come here.”

“Adam?” Adam asked, “What's going on?”

He ignored him, heading for the door, and Nigel growled standing up to run after him.

“No, no, you don't! You're gonna tell us right now what you're on about. Stop talking around this and just…”

Other Adam turned around fast, holding out his glowing hand. Adam suddenly appeared between them, and Other Adam fell back against the door stuck with both hands above his head.

“Adam, let me go!”

“No,” he said, shaking, “You were going to hurt Nigel!”

“Star, he wasn’t—”

“HE WAS!” Adam yelled, “WHAT IS GOING ON, ADAM?”

Other Adam’s eyes glowed as he glared at them both.

“I have a true mate,” he said, gritting his teeth, “And he *doesn’t* want me. Alright? He doesn’t bloody want a *thing* to do with me, and the two of you…your…your bond…it’s…” tears filled his eyes, “It’s *something* I can see. Something I…I want to see. Alright? Now let me GO!”

He fell, crumbling to the floor, and Nigel put his arms around Adam.

“Star, let him go.”

Adam didn’t move. “You have a mate?”

“I don’t,” Adam said, chuckling, “I *don’t* , Cousin. That’s the thing. I just want to see you happy, you know? That’s all I want. One of us has to be.”

Nigel felt Adam’s confusion and upset.

“He’s an asshole,” he said, “You’re an asshole too, but…anyone one who feels this and still walks away…I can’t fucking imagine.”

Other Adam got up, wiping his eyes as he smiled. “I’m glad neither of you have to feel it anymore. And adding in the familiar bit? Brilliant. Now you’re just…gonna be happy.”

“Adam…”

“I’m gonna go, Cousin,” he said, “I’ve mucked things up enough already.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t…” Adam said, his voice shaking, “I couldn’t…”

Other Adam shook his head. “I would’ve done the same,” he said, turning, “I would’ve done the same.”

They both watched him leave, and Nigel hugged Adam close as the door closed.

“Star?”

“How is that possible? Just…denying it?”

“It’s very possible,” Nigel said, kissing his cheek, “I was doing it, wasn’t I?”

Adam turned. “But you stayed by me,” he said, “You…you let me in, you…you crawled into my room.”

He chuckled, touching Adam’s cheek. “Yeah, well…I was pretty damn terrible at it.”

Adam kissed him. “You were, yes, but…Nigel don’t ever keep something like this from me again. I…I thought you didn’t want me, I thought…” he sniffled, “I thought something was wrong with me.”

“No, Darling, *never* .”

“I know that *now,* but…please just don’t do it again.”

Nigel nodded. “Alright, Adam. I promise.”

He held out his hand and Nigel took it, letting Adam lead him to the couch. They both climbed on, tangled up in one another fast.

“So…about the coven…”

“Star, let’s not. Alright?” he mumbled, nuzzling against Adam’s neck.

Adam looked up at him. “We can’t do this alone.”

Nigel frowned. “I don’t want to join some group of fuckers who only care about us because we’re powerful. Do you?”

“No, but—”

“So then we just don’t.”

“But, Nigel, it’s safer if we’re not alone.”

Nigel blinked.

It couldn’t be that simple. Could it?

“Wait, he said…he said we can join the wolves or the witches, yeah?”

Adam frowned. “Yes, because they’ll all want us.”

“Then why don’t we just make our own?”

“Our own coven? But we don’t know any witches other than Adam.”

“Then he can be our first invite.”

Adam put their hands together and the magic between them made Nigel shiver.

“You said you didn’t trust him.”

“No, but…you do.”

“We’d need more,” Adam said, entwining their fingers, “People we trust who aren’t just humans.”

Nigel smiled.

“I know just who to ask.”

Chapter 13

Adam squeezed Nigel's hand as they waited on the porch outside, nervous about seeing who they'd come to meet again. "I should've stayed home, Nigel," he said for the fourth time, looking back and forth around them.

"Star, I talked to Will, everything…"

The door opened and there stood Will Graham, Nigel's friend from the store what seemed like forever ago. His eyes were shining blue as he looked back and forth between them, and Adam felt his hand grow warm as their eyes met.

"Shovel Man," Nigel joked, "You going to let us in or what?"

"I don't like this," Will said, his voice almost a hiss, "If Hannibal…"

His mate, the vampire who made Adam even more uneasy than his mate, came from behind Will to smile at them both. "Please, come in. Will is just…being overprotective."

"It's my *job* to be," Will snapped, "This whole thing is just…"

Hannibal pulled Will away from the door and they stepped inside. Adam looked around, the decor normal but fancy, and when a dog came up to him he jumped back in surprise.

"He's harmless," Hannibal said, "If he likes you at least."

The dog sniffed Adam's hand, and licked it running off with eyes that seemed almost yellow.

“You have a nice home.”

“Thank you,” Hannibal said, “Please let’s all sit.”

They were led to a living room and Adam sat with Nigel on the couch while Will seemed to want to be anywhere else. He clung to Hannibal, eyes lit blue, and didn’t take his eyes off Adam.

“I must say I was intrigued by Nigel’s call,” Hannibal started, settling down in an armchair with Will leaning on the arm, “A coven.”

“It’s a stupid idea,” Will snapped, “The two of you can’t even…”

“We’ve mated,” Nigel growled, gripping Adam’s hand, “As you can see plainly, Will. Things have changed.”

Will’s eyes faded to their natural state, but he didn’t move. “Well that’s…that’s something at least.”

“And you’re expecting,” Hannibal said, making Will look at Nigel in surprise.

Adam gripped his hand tighter as he put the other on his belly. “Yes, it…it came with the whole mate package.”

“Congratulations,” Will said, smiling, “That’s the last thing I expected of you after… everything.”

Adam frowned as Hannibal looked at Will, his gaze both strained and fond.

“Everything?”

“Star, I told you Hannibal and Will they…”

“They’re your friends,” Adam said, “You told me that. What else is there?”

“Nigel,” Will hissed, making Adam glare at him.

“He’s my mate, Shovel Man, not you.”

“I don’t care, it’s none of his…”

“WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?” Adam yelled, growing impatient, “I don’t like this,” he said, standing and letting go of Nigel, “I don’t…I don’t like any of this at all.”

Nigel got up, grabbing Adam’s hand. “Star, just…just sit.”

“We came here to ask for their help, and you all know secrets I don’t and I…”

He put his hands on Adam’s cheeks, leaning their foreheads together, and the pull of their bond made Adam sigh. “Star, please.”

“I just…”

“Nigel helped us kill someone,” Hannibal interrupted, making Will gasp as Adam turned to look at him.

He smirked at Will. “Do you honestly think he’s going to run off and tell someone about a murder Nigel helped with? The werewolf carrying his child?”

“No, but…”

Adam sat down, and Nigel moved closer to him. He held his hand in his again. “So you owe him.”

“Yes,” Hannibal said, “We owe him a great deal. He was…the catalyst for our bond as well.”

Adam frowned at Nigel. “What does that mean?”

Nigel’s eyes glowed as he took Adam’s other hand and kissed both together. “Star…it’s…it’s complicated.”

“Why is everything complicated? Why can’t you just tell me?”

“Star…”

“Nigel and Hannibal were fucking,” Will interrupted, making Adam tense as he turned, “And I was jealous it…it was a whole thing.”

“You dated?”

Hannibal smiled. “Not at all, no, it…it was more convenience and comaraderie.”

Adam let out a long breath. “Ok, I…I think I understand.”

“Do you? Cuz I still don’t,” Will said, shaking his head, “I don’t get how the two of us can be in a witch coven.”

Adam blushed. “We need people we trust,” he said, gritting his teeth, “And Nigel trusts you both.”

“Do you?” Will asked.

“Do I what?”

“Trust us.”

He looked at Hannibal and then Will. “I trust your mate more than I trust you,” he admitted, “But I trust Nigel more than anyone.”

Will scoffed. “Ok so if we said yes what good would it even do? We’re both out of commission during the day.”

“A coven bond is still something that will protect us and our child, we…we need you. The bond will even protect the two of you, if you ever need us. Covens are…they’re everything.”

“Will…” Hannibal said, taking his hand.

Hannibal and Will looked at each other in silence, obviously communicating, and Adam felt Nigel grip his hand tighter. “So? Yes or no? Cuz we have other people to talk into all this, you know?”

They both turned. “Yes,” Will said, frowning, “On the condition that you’ll…”

“Stay for dinner,” Hannibal finished, making Will turn to look at him in surprise.

Adam blinked. “Me too?”

“Of course, Adam,” Hannibal said, smiling and showing off his fangs as he stood, “The last time we met there was strife. We’d like to change that, if you’re willing.”

Nigel squeezed his hand. “Ok.”

“Excellent,” Hannibal said, standing, “I will go get dinner started. Please just…talk. Will can fill me in later, I assure you.”

He kissed Will softly, touching his cheek, and when he was gone it was like the tension came back into the room. Adam frowned as the dog came up for petting, and the yellow eyes seemed more real up close.

“Why does it have yellow eyes?”

“He’s a hybrid,” Will said, his voice tense, “Like I am. It…was a gift from Hannibal to me so I didn’t lose him.”

“I thought the poor thing smelled fangy,” Nigel teased, petting it.

“Winston, sit,” Will said, making the dog come over to sit with him.

They were all quiet again, the tension thick, and Nigel sighed.

“So, Adam and I aren’t just mated,” he said, “I’m his familiar.”

Will blinked. “Famil…like a cat? Like a witch cat? That’s a real thing?”

Adam grabbed Nigel’s hand and glared at him. “He's not a *cat* , he’s a werewolf.”

“Well I know *that* , I just…”

Hannibal suddenly appeared in the room, a whoosh as his speed brought him made Adam almost dizzy. “A familiar? Really? Is that why…you had the outbursts?”

“That and true mates,” Adam said, “It’s…it doesn’t happen often but when it does it’s powerful. Which is why we need the coven.”

“I see,” Hannibal said, frowning, “I wish you would’ve told us that sooner.”

“Why?” Nigel said, “You already said yes.”

“We did but…are you in some sort of danger? Is that it?”

“I already told you,” Nigel growled, “Our kid will be special, and both sides will want it. This whole familiar mate thing is super rare, and the true mate thing…it’s all about magic and power. Same as always. Whoever has the most of it….”

“Gets everything,” Will finished, frowning.

Adam felt his hands grow hotter and Nigel kissed the one they held. “Star, breathe.”

“You don’t have to do this,” he said, his voice shaking, “You don’t have to do any of this.”

Hannibal smiled. “Nigel was there for me when I needed him,” he said, “I think now is the time for us to be there for him when he needs us.”

“Thanks, Fangs,” Nigel sighed, “This whole thing…”

“Is nothing for now,” Hannibal said, “Nothing but a new bond that will feature all of us, yes? You do have more members in mind?”

They both looked at each other. “We do, yes.”

“Then we can’t wait to meet them.”

Adam felt Nigel’s worry in their bond, and pushed back all his love at him. He calmed, smiling at Adam, and Adam kissed their joined hands.

They were going to be just fine.

For now.

And with Adam’s magic joining them….they’d be able to take on anything.

Chapter 14

Dinner went better than Nigel expected, though Adam was still tense throughout and clung to him like danger was around the corner.

“I’ve never met a true mated witch before,” Hannibal said, sipping his blood, “Though I’m certain you’ve never met a mated vampire either.”

Adam frowned, eating slowly, but he barely touched the steak so Nigel picked it off for him.

“I’ve met vampires,” he said, defensive, “Just not many.”

“I see.”

“My father just kept me sheltered, that was all,” he finished, his hand warm in Nigel’s, “I… I’m not some kind of unskilled child.”

“He didn’t say you were,” Will mumbled, “Just that he’s never met a mated witch. Why are you defensive?”

Adam gripped Nigel’s hand tighter. “I don’t do well with new people.”

“Obviously.”

“Will…”

Will scoffed, shaking his head, “You know, the only way for us to all feel safe enough in this ‘coven bond’ is to trust each other. If you’d tell us what you’re so scared of…”

Nigel felt Adam's anger in their bond, bubbling at the edge of exploding, so he did the one thing he never had before.

He shifted.

Both Will and Hannibal stood up, and he climbed half in Adam's lap, nuzzling him as Adam pet his head.

"Nigel…"

He whined.

"Is it not dangerous for the child to shift?" Hannibal asked, coming back to the table.

Adam buried his face against Nigel's. "Nigel knows what's best."

"I'm sorry if…I don't mean to upset you, Adam."

He licked Adam's cheek and he smiled before looking at Will. "My biggest fear is someone taking my family away from me. I…I can't lose them."

"We understand."

"And we just…"

A sudden pop made all four of them tense up at the same time, especially when they saw the cause.

Other Adam was on the floor, holding his arm, and Nigel shifted back as Adam ran to him.

“Who is he? Why…”

He had bruises on his mouth, neck, and what looked like a bite.

“Shit,” Nigel growled, “Shit, shit, shit.”

“This is Adam,” Adam said, his voice shaking, “My cousin and the…other member of the coven. He…”

Other Adam laughed, and a trail of blood came from his mouth.

Will cursed. “Fuck! I’m calling an ambulance!”

“NO!” Adam yelled, reaching out to touch Other Adam’s face, “Adam, look at me.”

Other Adam smiled, shaking, and Nigel could feel Adam’s upset through their bond. He grabbed Adam’s hand tight, and felt the magic flow through them.

“Do it, Star, do it. I’m here.”

“I don’t…

“Will, *wait* .”

Nigel watched Adam put his forehead against his cousin's, and to his shock healed the wounds ailing him. He collapsed against Nigel after, as did Other Adam, and Hannibal picked up the other witch taking him into the living room while Nigel did the same for Adam. He laid him down across the couch, and Other Adam shot up like he'd been electrocuted.

"What!? Wh…oh Adam, you didn't."

Other Adam knelt at Adam's side, and Nigel growled at him.

"I'm not gonna hurt him, Nigel, I just…I shouldn't have come."

"You were dying," Hannibal said, "How exactly did you come to be here?"

Other Adam sighed. "I don't bloody know, now do I? I…I was out looking for someone, and then I was attacked from behind. I don't know why."

Will hissed. "Obviously it's because of this, this *coven* thing."

Other Adam looked at Nigel in surprise. "Coven?"

Nigel had tears in his eyes as he nuzzled Adam's cheek "We…we wanted to build our own."

He blinked. "And you want me?"

"Obviously."

He smiled. "You trust me that much?"

“Adam does,” Nigel said, “And I trust him.”

“Well, that’s…something.”

“Are we going to talk about the real danger that the two of you put is in or just ignore that?”

Other Adam turned to glare at Will. “You know, I pictured the two of you as much nicer once you mated. I was fucking wrong, I see.”

Both of them turned to look at each other, then back at him. “Who exactly are you?”

He smiled. “No one, obviously, but…this coven…is a very good idea.”

“Too bad we’re not gonna do it,” Will said, grabbing Hannibal’s arm, “Nigel, we owe you a lot but I’m not about to put Hannibal in danger just because you have a powerful kid. I….”

Nigel felt Adam stir, licking his cheek, and glared at Will as tears filled his eyes.

“Fuck you, Shovel Man. I could’ve left you to *rot* in your ridiculous damn pining and continued to let Hannibal fuck me but now…”

Adam gripped his wrist, and opened his eyes. “No one is fucking Nigel but me.”

Nigel laughed, kissing him, and ignored the others as he felt Adam’s magic flow through him.

Adam was ok.

He was going to be ok.

They parted, smiling at each other, and he could hear bickering still so he turned in time to see Will about to punch Other Adam in the jaw.

And everything froze.

Adam sat up as Other Adam sighed, stepping back.

“I don’t like them,” he said, sitting down in a chair, “But…we’ll need them I think.”

“How did you do that?”

Other Adam grinned. “Magic, Cousin. Obviously.”

“But…”

He sighed, rubbing his neck. “I think it was vampires,” he said, “I can still feel the bite.”

“Vampires? Why the hell…”

“We’re not the only ones who work with other species, Nigel, and…other witches and monsters mate each other. It might be a true mating, but it’s a mating nonetheless.”

Nigel felt Adam touch his belly.

“And they want our baby.”

He frowned at them. “They want *you* ,” he said, “And if it takes force they’ll get you.”

“You said we had to agree to a coven, not be bullied into it.”

“What better way to make you agree than to scare you? This is only the beginning, and…I’m sorry to say it might not end the way any of us expects.”

Nigel felt Adam pull him closer and sighed.

“Wake them up then.”

“Why?”

“Because, we have to form a coven bond and…make sure we’re all safe.”

“Ok, but….”

Nigel took Adam’s hand in his, kissing it softly.

“And,” he started, growling, “You’re gonna tell us just who it was you were looking for and why it almost killed you.”

Other Adam looked away, his eyes suddenly lit, and Nigel tensed.

“Adam…”

“My mate,” he said, his voice shaking, “I was looking for my mate.”

“Why?”

Adam looked at Nigel. “Because he’s a vampire and he’s got a lot of explaining to do.”

Nigel growled. “The fuck?”

“Nigel…”

“If he’s putting us in danger, Star, then…”

Adam turned Nigel’s cheek and shook his head. “He’s not, it…it’s not like that,” he looked at Other Adam, “Your mate is he…?”

“You’ve met him,” Other Adam said, gripping the edges of the chair, “At the bar, you… you’ve met him.”

“I don’t know any fucking vampires other than Hannibal.”

Other Adam looked at them both. “That’s because I made you forget and I…I’m sorry.”

Adam felt warm against him.

“Tell us everything, Adam, but first…let them go.”

Other Adam sighed, snapping his fingers.

Will and Hannibal both looked murderous as they were unfrozen, but then confused.

“What…”

“Grab a seat, Fangs,” Nigel said, “I think…Cousin Adam has a lot of explaining to do.”

Hannibal and Will looked at Other Adam, who was staring at the ground.

“Are we going to like this story?”

Nigel sighed.

“We’ll see, Fangs. We’ll see.”

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